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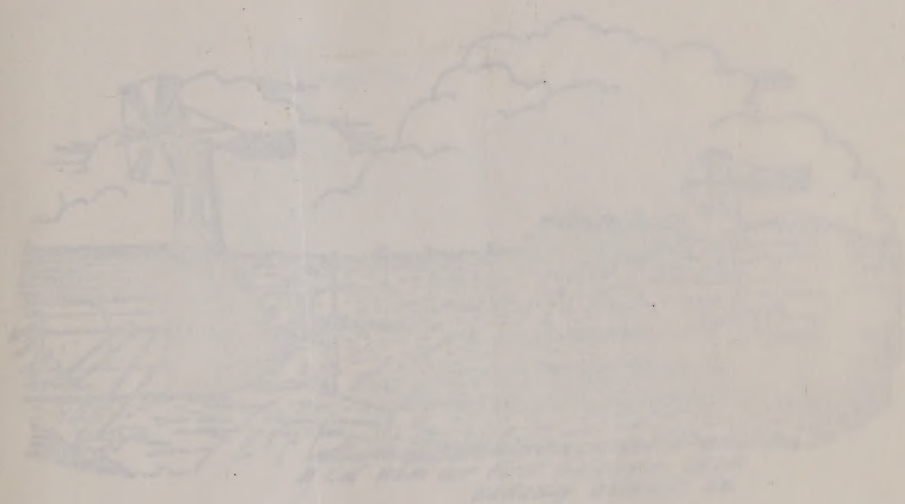




# HISTORIC BATAVIA

by

JOHN A. GUSTAFSON



*Published by*

**Batavia Historical Society**

**Batavia, Illinois**





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JOHN A. GUSTAFSON



A complete history of the city of Batavia,  
Illinois, from the first settler of this area up  
to the present year — 1962.

*John A. Gustafson*

*Published by*

**Batavia Historical Society**  
**Batavia, Illinois**

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1962

THE  
HISTORICAL RECORD  
OF THE  
CITY OF  
NEW YORK



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NEW YORK

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of us get a smattering of national and international history during our school days. We know something about our state history from several sources-history books, newspapers and visits to historic shrines. But we don't know too much about our local affairs, town and county. For instance, do we know the answers to the following questions? When was our town settled? By whom and why? What were the problems of our forefathers and how did they settle them? Who were the important townspeople in times past? Why were they important? Who built our dams, bridges, factories, schools, roads and churches? This story attempts to answer some of these questions for one little city in the Middle West.

We are affected by our predecessors in every move that we make, by the kind of city government they have handed down to us, by the schools and factories they have constructed, by the type of industries brought here by the nationalities of the people who came here, by the interesting homes they built, by the trees they planted; and so on without end. We are inclined to take all these things for granted, if we think of them at all, but they were and are the result of someone's thoughtful vision and care. We should be grateful for this heritage.

The writer has had a lot of fun digging up the information for this history. My sister, Lucile, a history teacher in Akron, Ohio, has taken my blunt facts and woven them into a connected story. With her background of general history, she has tied in national events with local events and thus, from the laws of cause and effects, has discovered the reasons for at least some of the local happenings.



I owe a debt of gratitude to the Batavia Herald for many historical facts; to Mrs. Carl Johnson, our librarian, for reading the manuscript and offering many helpful suggestions; to Mrs. Dorothy Ann Miller and Miss Eunice Shumway for the use of old scrapbooks and history books; to Mrs. Margaret Allan of Geneva for an autobiography of her father and the files of the Geneva Patrol; to August Mier for his research on the life of C. Payne; to Mr. Frank Smith, Mrs. J. P. Prindle and to many others, and I must not forget, my own family for getting me information and anticipating my every whim.

The following quotation by Daniel Burnham, a Chicago architect, should be our goal:

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably they themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble and logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with growing intensity. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be 'order' and your beacon 'beauty'.

The publishing of this History of Batavia was sponsored by the Batavia Historical Society while Miss Eunice K. Shumway was president.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language. It is argued that a knowledge of the history of the language is essential for a full understanding of the language itself. The paper then goes on to discuss the various factors which have influenced the development of the English language over the centuries. These factors include the influence of other languages, the influence of social and cultural changes, and the influence of technological advances. The paper concludes by stating that the study of the history of the English language is a fascinating and important field of research.

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## INTRODUCTION

"You cannot imagine a cooler, shadier, more delightful retreat from the noise and heat of the city than this beautiful little island town, with its charming surroundings, nestled cozily in the green hollow of the Fox River valley, a lovely undulation of hill and dale threaded by a beautiful river, about whose borders a dense foliage casts lingering shadows. No picture on canvas can rival the landscapes I have seen here."

The correspondent of the Chicago Post and Mail, under date line of July 13, 1875, was of course talking about Batavia. He goes on to say that there were "Calm still pools of water, in some graceful bend of the river where the long branches droop to meet, while placid-faced cows, mildly watch their shadows as they stand half submerged in the tranquil waters, or darker, stiller spots where a boat lies idly moored with a lazy fisherman extended at ease, intent only on his pipe and rod. Right in the center of the pretty town, one finds such pictures; not one or two, but a constant succession of them, each more attractive than the last."

Batavia has changed but little. It is still "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." It has grown, taken on some city airs, acquired some new industries, but the beauty of the river, the tree-lined streets, the beautiful homes and parks are still a part of the local scene.

The late Forest Crissey loved all the Fox River country-side, remarking, "As to the Valley itself, its intimate loveliness entranced me with a spell that has never waned. I have wandered all over America; but every return to the Fox River Valley has given me a deeper appreciation of its loveliness."



Such is Batavia as a picture, but it is more than that. It is a city of 7,496 persons, according to the now out-of-date 1960 government census, in Kane County, Illinois, a small midwestern community of significance chiefly because it is so typically American, "nestled" as it is, on either side of the beautiful Fox river, it is thirty-eight miles west of Chicago, seven miles north of Aurora, and three miles south of Geneva, the county seat. Freight may reach Batavia by way of branch lines of the C. & N. W. or the C. B. & Q., but, not coming under that category we people might arrive there by way of the East-West Tollway connecting with both the Tri-state Tollway and the Congress St. Expressway; the Aurora-Elgin Bus Line; or by following State Route No. 25 or No. 31.

As for its name, Batavia was named by Judge Isaac Wilson, one of the first settlers, in honor of Batavia, New York, his home city. Originally the name comes from the Dutch language and means "fair meadows". However, it has had several unofficial, rather descriptive designations.

Before it had any official appellation at all, mail passing through Naperville was addressed to the "Head of the Big Woods". Mail so addressed successfully reached its destination, too! This little town, in common with most communities, has had its nicknames, in this case, Rock City and the Windmill City. The former title was earned by the fact that, in times past, tons and tons of limestone were quarried from the half dozen or more pits in this area and were used in the erection of all manner of structures in the Valley towns, nearby Chicago, and even more distant towns. In years past there was a Rock City Band and there still is a Rock City Lodge. The

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the  
theoretical framework in the study of the  
relationship between the variables. The second part  
presents the empirical results, which show that the  
relationship is positive and significant. The third part  
discusses the policy implications of the findings.  
The paper concludes with a summary of the main  
findings and a list of references.

The results of the study indicate that the  
relationship between the variables is positive and  
significant. This finding is consistent with the  
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the paper.



name Windmill City is equally obvious as there have been three big factories manufacturing windmills right in the heart of the community. These factories have sent their products all over the world where they have for years pumped water, ground grain, and eased the work of man in all manner of ways. The names of the U.S. Wind Engine and Pump Company, the Challenge Company, and the Appleton Manufacturing Company have been seen on the vanes of mills wherever the winds blow.

The nicknaming propensity carries over into the designation of certain sections of Batavia, too. The "Patch" was the settlement of Irish and Germans in the southeast quarter, and "Jericho" was where most of the Swedes congregated in the southwest quarter of town. Naturally, the greatest division of all came between "East Side" and "West Side". There was a time when it was dangerous for a west side boy to go on the east side of the river or vice-versa. Residents not nearly venerable enough to be called "Old Timers" can well remember the gangs of boys, especially the "Dirty Eight Gang", who used to make life miserable for the daring "Outlanders" from the other side. But the fighting and rivalry is a thing of the past. Even the colorful nicknames have no meaning to most of the present-day inhabitants.

But, the inhabitants, the people in Batavia, what of them? The latest statistics can give us the number of inhabitants, but they can tell us nothing of the people in this little American community in the Midwest. One early historian said that there were ten ethnic groups that migrated to this area. That may have been the case, but there are not ten ethnic groups now. Modern sociologists say that the American melting pot is just an American myth, but, although that may be true of urban America, in the little rural communities of the



Mississippi valley there is a near approach of one people from many. Here the first wave of migrants were Yankees, Hoosiers, English--the very New England appearance of the town shows that. After the Civil War came great numbers of Swedish settlers whose thrifty habits and industry nicely supplemented the earlier culture. In the last few decades peoples of every nationality have made their homes here, but no peoples are restricted as to type of job held, residence in certain sections of town, election to office, or prestige. This idyllic picture may not apply to the Negroes entirely, but as a whole the association between the races has been of mutual respect and happiness, both in school and at work.

Nature has been generous in the giving of natural resources. The many peoples have used these gifts in the production of goods to make life easier and more enjoyable. Nor has the reaching after that which improves the physical well-being clouded the seeking after high moral standards, for churches and schools have always been important to Batavians. All this may seem very ordinary, but it is the very essence of America.



## CHAPTER I

### The Dim Past -- Very Dim

But modern Batavia could not be what it is today, if it were not for events that took place not only thousands, but millions of years ago. And that is quite a story.

Batavia is what it is largely because of the Paleozoic age, confounding as that may sound. Now, there have been five geological eras in the formation of our earth, geologists tell us, eras that go back 1000 millions of years near to the beginning of time. Of these five very different eras, the one most important to this community, both geologically and economically, was the third, the Paleozoic. "Paleo" is a Greek word meaning "ancient"; "Zoic" is another Greek word meaning "life". This period of "ancient life" extended from 600 millions to 240 millions of years ago, during which time there were long cycles of millions of years when Illinois was covered with shallow seas, alternating with periods during which the land would rise and dry off, only to be submerged again.

As one might imagine, man could not resist the temptation to name successive periods within the era, each period once again having a specific role in our history. It was in the oldest of these, the Cambrian, that thick layers of sandstone and a dolomite limestone were deposited over the entire area. These rock layers slant upward to Wisconsin. It is the rain falling on the outcroppings and seeping down between the layers of rock which forms reservoirs for the abundant water supply so important to the future farmers and industrialists.

The second period in this era, the Ordovician, beginning some 510 millions of years ago, saw the formation of the so-called St.



ORIGINAL ARTICLES

THE EFFECT OF VITAMIN DEFICIENCY ON THE  
GROWTH OF THE RAT

By J. H. H. SMITH, M.D.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a diet deficient in vitamins upon the growth of the rat. The rats were divided into two groups, one receiving a diet deficient in vitamins and the other a diet containing all the necessary vitamins. The rats receiving the deficient diet showed a marked retardation in growth when compared with the rats receiving the complete diet. This result is in agreement with the findings of other investigators who have shown that a diet deficient in vitamins leads to a general wasting of the body and a retardation of growth. The results of this study indicate that a diet deficient in vitamins is not only harmful to the health of the rat but also to its growth. This finding is of importance in the study of the effect of vitamins upon the human body, as it suggests that a diet deficient in vitamins may lead to a general wasting of the body and a retardation of growth in man as well as in the rat.

Received for publication, March 1, 1919.

The following table shows the growth of the rats in the two groups during the first six weeks of the experiment. The rats receiving the deficient diet showed a marked retardation in growth when compared with the rats receiving the complete diet. This result is in agreement with the findings of other investigators who have shown that a diet deficient in vitamins leads to a general wasting of the body and a retardation of growth. The results of this study indicate that a diet deficient in vitamins is not only harmful to the health of the rat but also to its growth. This finding is of importance in the study of the effect of vitamins upon the human body, as it suggests that a diet deficient in vitamins may lead to a general wasting of the body and a retardation of growth in man as well as in the rat.

TABLE I  
Growth of Rats on Deficient and Complete Diets

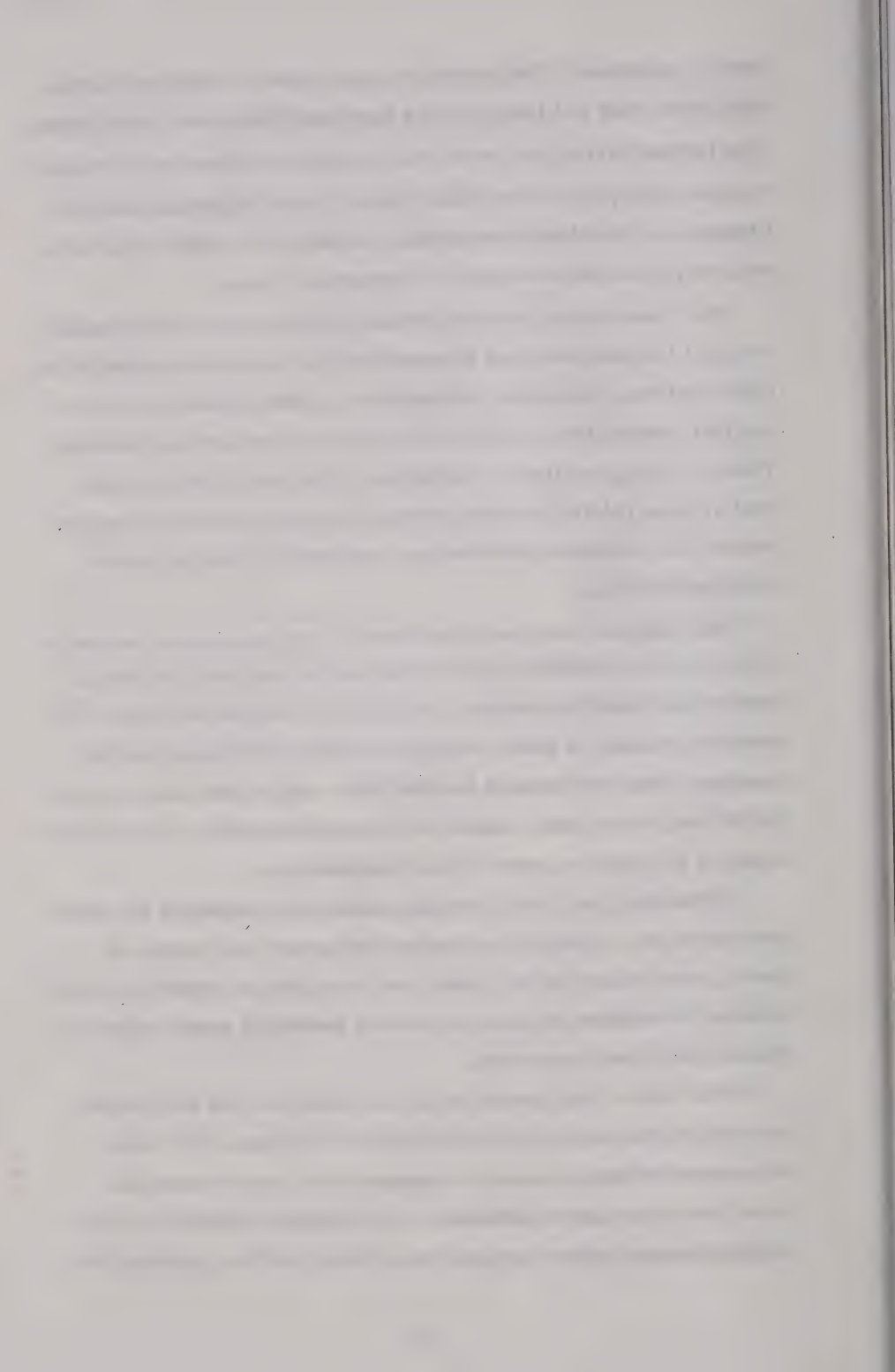
Peter's sandstone. This is what we enjoy when we visit the Starved Rock State Park and look up at the high bluffs along the Illinois River. Also formed during this period was the dolomite limestone containing the lead which, for a time, made Galena a more important town than Chicago, and the Mecca for all those needing lead. Over a vast area, we know, it was the focal point of converging roads.

But it was during the third period, the Silurian, in the Paleozoic era, that the limestone was created that was to be so important to the future Batavia. It is quite a dramatic tale. During this period the sea that covered this area was inhabited by countless sea animals. These, in dying, settled to the bottom of the sea. The bones and shells, being chiefly calcium carbonate, in time and under pressure became the limestone quarried here and used to construct many imposing buildings.

One may well imagine the millions of tiny sea animals needed to form a chunk of limestone that we can hold in our hands observing the designs made by crustacea long extinct. Imagine we cannot, the countless billions of shells required to produce the limestone that outcrops along both sides of the Fox River and extends down from 80 to 100 feet, having been formed for present consumption in the Niagara epoch of the Silurian period of the Paleozoic era.

Fortunately for a well rounded economy, two-thirds of the state profited by the Carboniferous period that turned rank growth of ferns, palmy plants called cycads, and trees into all important coal a mere 350 millions of years ago so that industrial wheels might be turned and homes be warmed.

Thus, over a long period in the very dim past, the local water reservoirs, the limestone, and the coal were formed. But there were other geological events in comparatively recent times that have great value and significance. Of inestimable importance, both in the economic and the esthetic sense, were the four, perhaps five,



glaciers that have covered this area of the Fox River Valley. This is especially true of the last two, the Illinoisian and the Wisconsin. The former was stopped by the Illinois Ozarks about 150,000 years ago. The latter extended only about as far south as the Illinois River, beginning 50,000 years ago, and receding, finally, only about 25,000 years ago.

What are the benefits of these last glacier visitations? Land is much more level than it was before glaciation. An automobile trip through unglaciated Jo Daviess County in the northwestern corner of Illinois will verify this. In Kane County, engineers have had an easier time constructing roads and railroads. Farmers have been able to make a much more extensive use of labor-saving machinery because the land is comparatively level. Of course, too, level land means much less loss of soil through erosion and waste in cultivation because of roughness or steepness.

The flatness of this area which still causes comment from newcomers was a cause of wonderment to a certain Scandinavian pioneer who had worked for many years on the railroads in his native mountainous Sweden before coming to this country and settling in Kane County. Soon after his arrival it was proposed that a railroad be built through his land.

"No, sir," said the Swede, "they can't build a railroad across this country."

"And why not, Swanson?" he was asked.

"Vy not? You ask me, 'Vy not?' Don't you see the country's too flat? You haven't any place to run your tunnels through!"

Again, the glacier through its grinding action and through the deposition of sediment of soil has greatly increased the quantity of loose material overlying the bed rock. This material, from 30 to 75 feet in thickness, only needed the topping of decayed vegetation accumulated through the intervening years to make rich black





prairie soil.

This soil in and around Batavia is consistently good not only in area but in depth due to the wide variety of chemicals, essential to plant growth, spread rather evenly over the region. Moreover, since the glacial visitation was so recent, there has been much less loss in fertility due to leaching than in the southern part of the state. Fortunately, too, the soil is fine but not too fine so that it does not blow. It is mainly a rather clayey loam, which drains fairly well and breaks readily under the plow. It is, indeed, a "good earth."

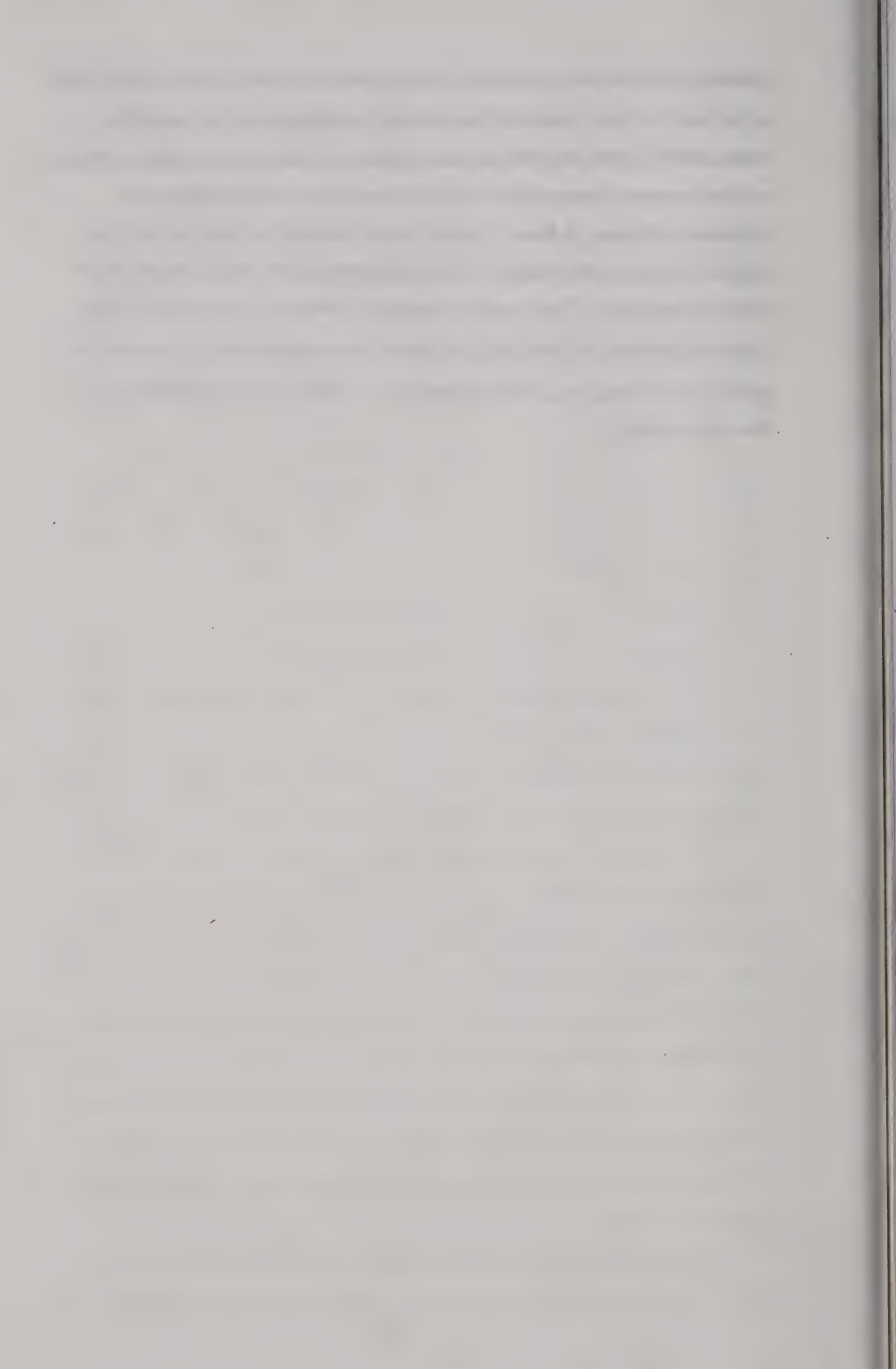
Another contributing factor of the glacier was a stratum of sand and gravel twenty feet or less in depth. These deposits hold the rains that seep down from the surface of the earth so that there is an abundant supply of sweet water that can be lifted from shallow wells. Early settlers were at first chary of this prairie because of the apparent lack of water until some venturesome soul dug a well and found an ample supply. Moreover, the sand and gravel, taken from numerous pits in and around Batavia, have furnished excellent material for the topping of gravel roads, and, later, as an ingredient for the making of concrete roads, culverts, bridges and buildings.

Possibly the most important benefit of the Wisconsin glacier was the excellent water power that attracted ambitious promoters to this country. Deposits by this glacier obliterated the old drainage lines. Consequently, the new streams formed by the latest glacier had to seek new channels that are rather boisterous and comparatively fast as they flow over the rock ledges. Early settlers found there were ideal spots for the erection of dams to divert the water to operate waterwheels that might turn logs into lumber or grain into flour, so that the industrial development never lagged behind the agricultural.

Batavians are indebted to the glacier, also, for reasons of beauty and recreation. Colorful boulders of many sizes were



picked up in the St. Lawrence Valley and set down in the Fox Valley to be used in the construction of such buildings as the beautiful Methodist Church as well as numerous fireplaces and walls. Picnicers and nature lovers alike trek a few miles west of town to Johnson's Mound, a Kane County forest preserve and one of the highest spot in the country. Both Johnson's and Bald Mound were glacial deposits. The greatest beauty, however, is the river with flowers growing wild along its banks and trees bending toward the water as if they, too, would admire it. The river is the heart of the community.



## CHAPTER II

### SETTING THE STAGE

Paradoxical as it may sound, this rich, easily accessible section of Illinois that would seem to be a settlers' paradise was the last part of the state to be settled, due to the fact that it was an Indian reservation until 1832. In 1816, a treaty was made allotting the country from the southern tip of Lake Michigan west to the Mississippi River to the Pottawatomies, the Sacs, the Fox and the Winnebagos as a permanent reservation. In 1825, apparently with the assistance of "strong water", the invading white men induced certain red men to agree to another treaty according to which all Indians were to vacate these lands for other reservations near Council Bluffs, Iowa. Some of the more meek did move, but others who were more aggressive were prepared to fight for the lands where their people had lived, hunted, and buried their dead. In 1827 occurred the Winnebago War, caused as much by acts of hostility on the part of the lead miners at Galena as by the Indians. The years of 1831 and 1832 saw the beginning and end of the Sac (or Sauk) war, better known as the Black Hawk War after the dauntless Indian chief who led these Indian forays against the invaders. He tried to enlist the aid of the local chief, Shabbona of the Pottawatomie tribe, in his expeditions, but both Shabbona and Waubonsie of the Fox Valley were very friendly to the white men. In fact, they scouted all over northern Illinois warning white people of their danger. The absence of Black Hawk depredations in this area was not so much due, however, to the activities of the local chiefs, as the fact that here there were no settlers. The very threat of Indian attacks was enough to keep this a redman's country. Even the hardy Christopher Payne, who came in the fall of 1832 with the intention of settling, thought better of it and retreated to the safety of the nearby village of Naperville, to return the next year.





Black Hawk and his followers were finally defeated and driven across the Mississippi River; all excepting the friendly Pottawatomies, who stayed on to live peaceably with the settlers, not realizing that they, too, would have to "move on" in a few years.

There was one lanky, awkward fellow from central Illinois who played an obscure and unheroic role in this whole episode. Next time he came this way, his stature and role had grown. That man was Abraham Lincoln. He was of no significance to the eager pioneers of 1832. Land was. That this part of the state was open for settlement was soon known all over the country and eventually all over the world.

The early political history of this new land did not concern these land hungry migrants but we might concern ourselves with it for a moment. They were fortunate in that they were hastening into a country whose first formal government had been that of the Northwest Ordinance, which has very aptly been called the wisest document ever issued by a deliberative assembly. Human rights and happiness were safeguarded here as they had never been anywhere in the whole world. One important guarantee was that of gradual progress in political status until full statehood was achieved. In 1801, Illinois became a part of the Indiana territory. Ten years later, it acquired the name and title of "The Territory of Illinois", Wisconsin being included within its boundaries. Finally, on December 3, 1818, minus the Wisconsin Territory, it became the state of Illinois even though its population was only 40,258, much fewer than the 60,000 stipulated by the Ordinance of 1787.

It was Nathaniel Pope, delegate to Congress at the time Illinois became a state, who determined that letters to the future Batavians should be addressed to Batavia, Illinois, rather than to Batavia, Wisconsin. It had been decided that the northern boundary of the state should be a line running west to the Mississippi from near the lower



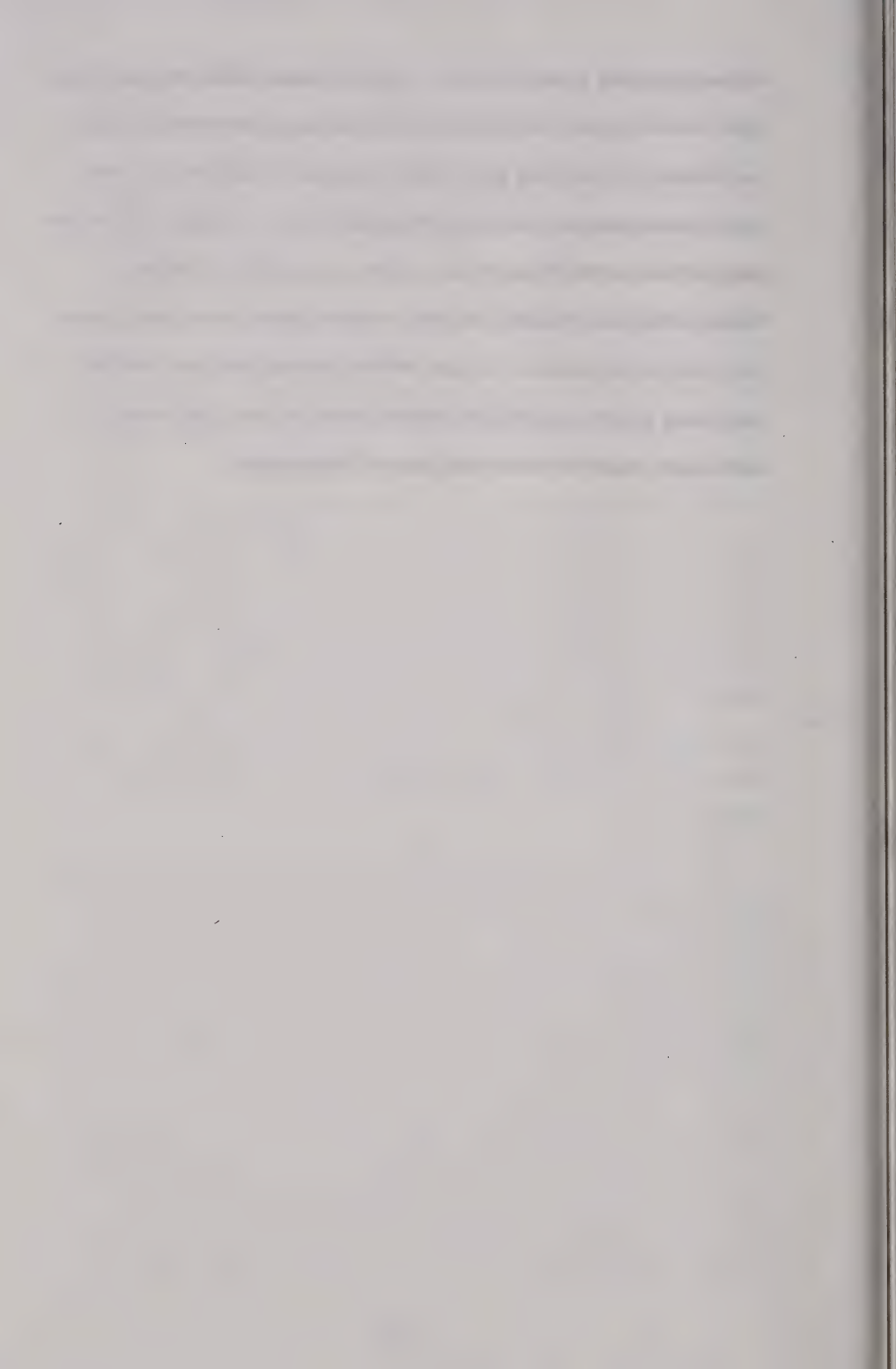
tip of Lake Michigan, but at Pope's insistence it was placed at a distance fifty-one miles north of that to a line along longitude 42 degrees 30 minutes. This resulted in Illinois acquiring a shoreline along Lake Michigan, the city of Chicago, and incidentally, Batavia. However, the primary and immediate reason for this boundary change was that "additional security for the perpetuation of the union" would be afforded if Illinois were identified with the northern states on the slavery question. It never could have been without the addition of this territory, for most of the people in the southern part of the state were pro-slavery. They had come from the Upper South by way of the Ohio River and the Wilderness Trail, traveling no farther than they had to so that when Illinois became a state in 1818 practically the entire population was south of a line drawn from Terre Haute, Indiana, to St. Louis, Missouri. To this day, seventeen of the most southern counties do not have the township form of local government, but have county commissioners as in the plantation country of Virginia. However, along with their household goods and their political practices, and in spite of the Northwestern Ordinance expressly forbidding it, they brought slaves and a pro-slavery philosophy.

Nevertheless, historical dates and facts, differing philosophies, did not really concern most of those anxious to settle in this "ex-Indian reservation" country. Some Hoosiers, such as Thompson Paxton, hated slavery and came north because they wanted to live in a land that was free, but most prospective settlers coming from New York and New England were thinking of land being free in terms of farming or industrial exploitation. The industrial and commercial districts of New England were apparently become over-populated. The war of 1812 had crippled the businesses of those who were in the carrying trade. Farming in New England was becoming so unrewarding that even the hardy New Englanders were becoming





discouraged and ready to move. Besides, after 1832, the year Black Hawk was defeated, one could come by an easy water route, down the Hudson, through the Erie Canal finished in 1825, across the Great Lakes and dock at Lake Michigan ports. In 1835, 1200 people left Buffalo for the West by lake travel. In 1840, the Buffalo to Chicago fare was \$20.00, but ten or twelve years after that it was only four to six dollars. It goes without saying that now that the stage was finally set and the curtain ready to rise, the drama of settlement would proceed with unparalleled speed.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE FIRST SETTLER

No careful dramatist could have created a more perfect role for a pioneer than that of the first settler in Batavia. In every way he was all that one could hope for in a pioneer. His parents must have been prescient for they named him Christopher Columbus Payne. Where he was born is a moot question. According to an historian writing in 1878, Squire E. S. Town, who settled in Batavia in 1834, and knew Payne well, declared that Payne told him frequently that he "hailed from the Empire State". However, August Mier, who has done more in the ways of original research on this man than any one else, says that the records in Walworth County, Wisconsin, state that he was born in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, in 1786. When a child of fourteen he was taken to Belmont, Ohio. In the War of 1812 he became a fearless Indian fighter, serving as a scout. He was one of twenty-five who successfully defended Fort Harrison in Indiana against a band of 500 Indians. Where he went after that we do not know except that in April, 1831, he, his wife, six children, and some seed potatoes arrived at Naperville in DuPage County, coming by ox team and wagon from North Carolina. His was the second family of settlers in that county. While in Naperville he started to earn the description given of him by Ferslaw's Kane County Gazetteer in 1857 as a "man of strong native mind, of ingenuity, and of adventurous habits." For John and Joseph Naper, who built a saw mill using iron work which they had brought from the East, he built the first dam across the DuPage River. He did this in a very ingenious fashion. First he laid logs across the stream, weighting them down with stones until he had reached the desired height. These, finally, he covered with a combination of straw and dirt. The Naper brothers next constructed a crude grist mill. Payne's job was to make the grinding stones from boulders.

During his stay in Naperville he was one of a committee of three

THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON

The history of the city of Boston is a subject of great interest and importance. It is a city of many centuries, and its history is full of interesting events. The city was founded in 1630, and has since that time been a center of commerce and industry. It has been the site of many important events, and has played a significant role in the history of the United States. The city is known for its many historic landmarks, and its beautiful harbor. It is a city of many traditions, and its people are proud of their heritage. The history of the city is a story of growth and progress, and it is a story that is still being written.

to build a school and to put it into operation, the teacher receiving twelve dollars a month. Of the twenty-two pupils who attended, three were Payne's children. Payne, himself, could neither read nor write.

These rather tame and peaceful activities were interrupted when his brother, who was an Evangelist, was killed and scalped during the Black Hawk war near Ottawa in 1832. His own wife and children were overlooked when warning for settlers to flee to Fort Dearborn was given so they had to spend a night in the woods, returning to the settlement the next day. With hate against the Indians thus aroused he and his son, Uriah, served during July and August of that year in the mounted volunteer company captained by Joseph Naper against Black Hawk. After that he sold his claim in Naperville and came to the head of Big Woods, but Indian disturbances sent him back to Naperville where he stayed until the spring of 1833. On October 6, 1832 he voted in the election for a Justice of the Peace for the Flagg Creek District.

After the heavy winter snows were melted and the trails were somewhat dry, once again he fared forth for Batavia, a yoke of oxen drawing some necessary goods and his seed potatoes. Let us follow him in imagination. Going north from Naperville, he would have traveled along an Indian trail to what is now Warrenville. Here he waded across a ford in the west branch of the DuPage River being careful that his goods were not wetted and then struck off northwest along the Warrenville-Batavia trail to the Head of the Big Woods, the present site of Batavia.

Travel for him was much more circuitous than it is today because of the sloughs or marshes, long since drained, that he had to circumvent. As he skirted the edge of the Big Woods, he would have noticed that the trees were mainly oak, walnut, elm, maple and hickory, all satisfactory woods for building, for fuel, for fencing, for almost any need. Rounding the north end of the Woods,





he undoubtedly went down to the edge of the river to water his stock and noted the clarity of the water and recalled stories of the Pottawatomie Indians catching 40 and 50 pound fish with single barbed spears. He would have studied the prairies covered with coarse, reedy, thick-rooted, shoulder high prairie grass wondering if it would ever be possible to till grasslands easily, if there would ever be a plow sharp enough and strong enough to really break the heavy sod.

Why he did not make his claim along the river so that he could take advantage of the water power we do not know. Instead, he turned east a mile and marked out his half section claim at the edge of Big Woods. Here he erected a cabin fourteen feet by sixteen feet and thus became the first settler in all Kane County.

Diggings conducted by August Mier, the late Bert Smith, and Roy Stevens on the site pointed out to them by Mr. William Johnson and the Schimelpfenigs settled once and for all the exact position and character of the cabin. In the spring of 1933 these men found the cellar on the farm of William Johnson not far from the C.B. & Q. tracks. It was no makeshift building such as housed the boy, Lincoln; quite the contrary. There was a big fireplace with glazed bricks! Bits of china with a colored design, an andiron, tongs, nails, window glass and bits of the old walnut logs show that the families living here had enjoyed some of the niceties of life, although all of these things did not date back to the days of the Paynes, of course. However, in order to guard his family against Indian attack, he had built a cellar, which contained a capped spring, under part of his cabin. His main well was some distance away.

In September of 1833, his cabin finished, Payne returned to nearby Naperville to bring his wife and children to their new home. Mrs. Payne probably kept as busy as her husband. In 1834, when



E. S. Town and Harry Boardman stopped at his cabin to spend the night with the family, sixteen people were present. Mrs. Payne said that at one time she had slept twenty-three persons in that one-roomed cabin. Such was the friendliness and hospitality of the frontier.

There is an incident that further illustrates the Paynes' generosity and civic-mindedness. In the spring of 1834 he was the possessor of ten bushels of potatoes, grown from the seed potatoes he had originally brought all the way from North Carolina in his slow, lumbering ox-drawn wagon. Colonel Joseph Lyon, who had come that year, wanted some of those seed potatoes to plant on his claim and tried to induce Payne to part with some. Payne refused to sell, saying that he was going to plant all of them and then share them at harvest time with any and all of the settlers who wanted them. He told the Colonel to see him then. In the fall the Colonel reminded Payne of the promise. The latter said he would sell him five bushels, but no more, as he intended to give anyone who wished the opportunity to buy an equal amount. This did not satisfy Lyon who wanted more and was, apparently, quite shrewd.

"I'll tell you what you do", he said. "You sell me those outside rows of potatoes and I'll take my chance on getting five bushels from them."

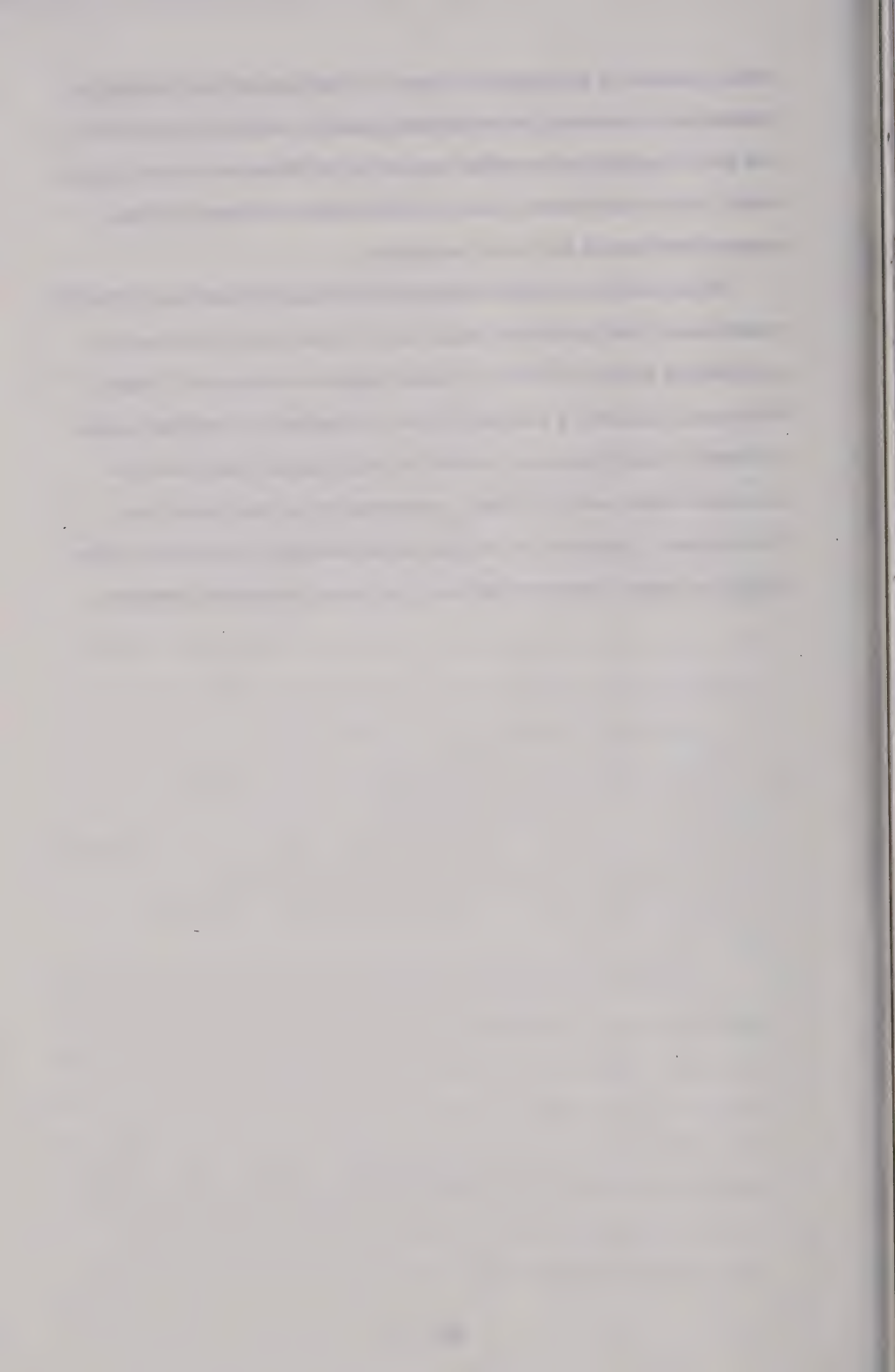
Evidently worn down by argument, Payne finally consented, and Lyon, knowing or guessing potato yields, harvested eleven bushels from two rows. However, the price per bushel had not been established so Lyon asked Payne what he was going to charge him. Lyon was willing to pay nearly any price since his family had not tasted potatoes since they had reached this wilderness. Payne replied, "Well, those potatoes have caused me a lot of hard work and worry because I brought them such a long distance. Do you think fifty





cents a bushel is too much for them?" The Colonel was stunned to silence for a moment, but recovered quickly, paid for his potatoes, and left as quickly as possible wondering if Payne were in his right mind. Payne harvested a total of 300 bushels that year, selling many a five bushel lot to his neighbors.

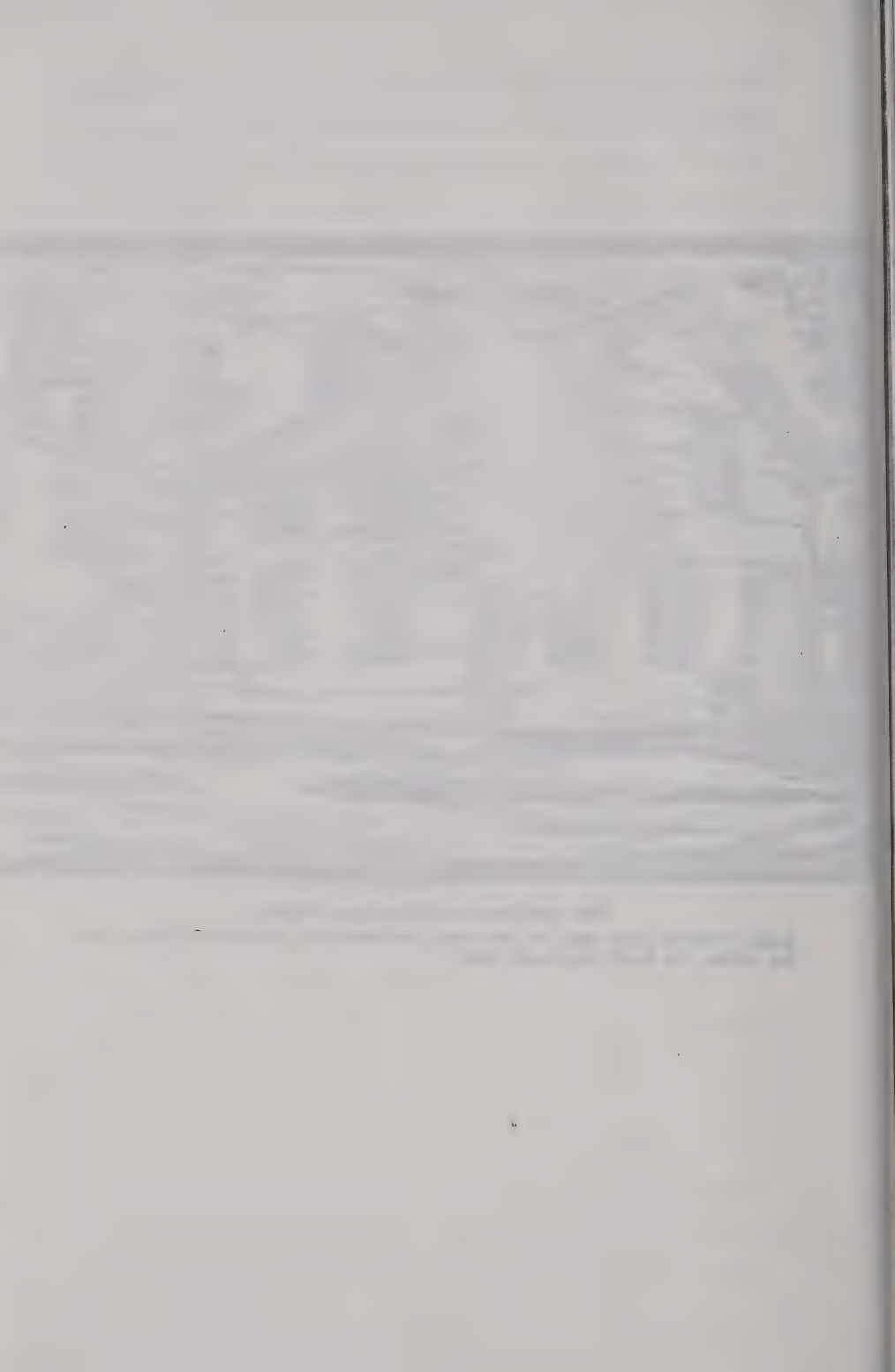
Payne sold his claim to Judge Isaac Wilson in 1835 for \$1500.00, which was a good price for those days. From Batavia he went to the present site of the town of Lake Geneva in Walworth County, Wisconsin, building a saw mill there. Later he sold out and moved to Duck Creek, Wisconsin, where he built another saw mill. He remained there until his death, respected by all who knew him. Christopher Columbus Payne was an exceedingly interesting fellow, typical of many American pioneers on many American frontiers.





The Residence of Judge Isaac Wilson.

Judge Wilson came here in 1835 and purchased the Christopher Payne claim for \$1500. He built this house later.



## CHAPTER IV

### FIVE YEARS OF THE INFANT TOWN

1833

James Nelson was the only settler other than Payne who arrived at or near Batavia in 1833. He settled at the edge of what is now known as Nelson's Grove, two miles west of Batavia. The present site bears little resemblance to the dense woods of those days.

1834

The year of 1834 saw an influx of newcomers. During the cold month of January, James Vanatta and a man named Corey settled east of town. On April 24, Colonel Joseph Lyon, whom we have already met, arrived. Also, John Gregg, a blacksmith, an absolute necessity in frontier life, set up his shop two miles east of the river that spring. The shop consisted of an anvil on a stump and a bellows mounted in an open shed. In the spring or early summer there came, too, James Latham, Elijah S. Town, Joel McKee and his brother-in-law, James Risk, Harry Boardman, Titus Howe and William Vandeventer, all of whom took up claims at or near the present city of Batavia. Titus Howe built his cabin on the northwest corner of what is now Main and Water Streets. Joel McKee built his home one-half mile north on what is now Batavia Avenue. Elijah Town erected his cabin alongside a little creek one-half mile south.

In June Captain C. B. Dodson settled near the mouth of Mill Creek, one and one-half miles south of town where he built a trading post to trade with the Indians. He named this settlement Clybournville, after his partner, Clybourne, who came from Chicago. He tried desperately to make this settlement succeed. He even made an effort to get the county seat established here, but to no avail.



The University of Chicago Press is a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Illinois. Its purpose is to publish and distribute books, pamphlets, and other printed matter, and to conduct a library of books and pamphlets. The Press is organized into a Board of Trustees, a Board of Directors, and a Board of Officers. The Board of Trustees is composed of the President, the Vice-President, and the members of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is composed of the President, the Vice-President, and the members of the Board of Officers. The Board of Officers is composed of the President, the Vice-President, and the members of the Board of Officers.

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With Clybourne's help he built a dam and saw mill on the Creek in the summer of 1834, but for some reason the settlement died aborning. However, the partners' relations with the nearby Pottawatomie Indians were always good.

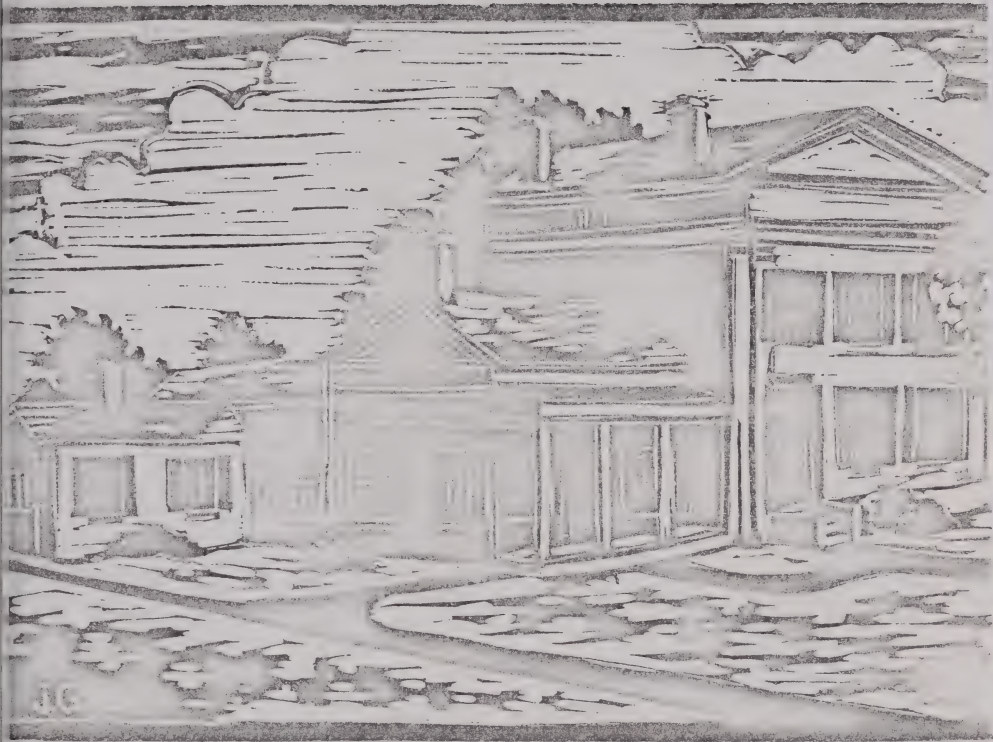
The first school was erected in the fall of 1834 on Colonel Lyon's claim located about a mile east of the river. This was a most important event, bringing people from miles around to assist in the erection of this, the first public building. Some of these people had not as yet put up their own houses nor made themselves comfortable against the approaching cold winter. Some were young men with no families, yet all set to work with a will so that the building was soon finished.

It was a multi-purpose building. Here the first political meeting was held. Here some of the first services were preached by the Reverend Mr. N.C. Clark. Here the first Sabbath School, entirely undenominational, was formed early in 1835 with E.S. Town as its Superintendent. The Baptist Church was organized in this building in 1836. But most important of all, a man from Vermont named Knowles gave instruction to nine pupils that first winter. How many more pupils attended that school before it fell into disuse, or how many other events happened within those walls, we can only conjecture.

### 1835

The year 1835 brought many more settlers, many of them men of substance and of a fine caliber. Among them were Judge Wilson, who bought the Payne claim, Joseph W. Churchill, the first attorney and the son-in-law of Judge Wilson, and William VanNortwick and most of his family, John being the exception.





The Residence of John Van Nortwick.

Until recently a part of the High School and used as the Home Economics Bldg. Torn down in 1950 to make way for the High School addition.



As Payne exemplified one type of pioneer, so did the early Van Nortwicks another, that of the industrial promoter. William Van Nortwick was a man of wide vision and untiring energy, who had lived in New York State before coming west. There he had become widely known as a contractor for some of the more important public works. For some time he had been Superintendent of Canals in northern New York, his nineteen year old son, John, being in the engineering department. William came to Batavia when he was fifty-seven years of age, bringing with him his experience as an engineer. It was he who laid out the first tract of land on the east side of the river for the village of Batavia. With the aid of his son, John, he built a dam across the Fox, and erected a saw mill and a "flouring" mill. He and his wife, the former Martha Flack, were both interested as much in the cultural and civic welfare of the community as they were in their own business interests.

While his father was busy starting his Batavia enterprises, son John was busy with enterprises of his own. In February of 1835, he was married to Patty Maria Mallory in Penn Yan, New York. The next year his son, William, was born, so that it was not until late 1836 or 1837 that he came west to see his family and the land that his father had staked out for him. It was then that he started to help his father in the care and management of the businesses, investing \$3,000 of his own money as well as funds from other New York capitalists to form the firm of VanNortwick, Barker, House and Co. Their flour mills under the name of Batavia Mills were kept busy, sending great shipments of flour to Chicago. In 1842 this mill was sold to Alanson House.

Work called him back to New York, but he had been pleased with what he saw in Batavia, so that when he lost his position in New York





State with the ending of the public works program, he worked for a short time for the government at the Brooklyn Dry Docks and then came to Batavia. Here his training and experience in the civil engineering profession received wide recognition. The men projecting the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad got in touch with him and asked him to accept the position of Chief Engineer with the road, which he did. This road later took the name of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company. Under his superintendency the railroad was built from Chicago to Freeport and from Turner Junction, now West Chicago, to Fulton on the Mississippi River. Later, John VanNortwick accepted the position of consulting engineer for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Co. which was then laying a track from Turner Junction to Batavia and thence to Aurora. After this line was finished, he became president of the line for eight years. Consequently, he was the directing power for two great railroad systems while they were under construction.

He was versatile, for he was one of the founders and a large stockholder in the Batavia Paper Company, later to be called the VanNortwick Paper Co. In 1869 he became the sole owner only to have it become a stock company the next year. At one time this was one of the largest paper factories in the West.

Real estate also was one of his interests and investments. He platted more land on the east side of the river and did the first surveying of land on the west side of Batavia. In addition to all this no civic duty in the town was too unimportant for him to attend to. In 1875 he moved out to a residence on west Main Street Road that Captain Carr had built. Here he had a half mile race track, for he loved fast horses. After the VanNortwick bank experienced financial troubles during the depression, he moved into town. Yes, the Van-



Nortwicks, too, were interesting men. And they, too, had greatness.

Less needs to be said of the others coming that year, J. W. Churchill became the owner of a valuable farm as well as a respected lawyer. His abilities seemed to lie in the field of politics rather than that of business, for after he had been here only a year, in 1836, he was elected to the State Senate. Now, being both a lawyer and an Episcopalian, ritual was important. One Sunday while he and his daughter were driving to St. Charles where the nearest Episcopal Church was located, he asked his daughter if she had her Prayer Book. "No, father," she replied, "I forgot it." "Forgot your prayer book!" exclaimed the excited man. "Go home and get it. You might as well be in hell as in an Episcopal Church without a prayer book."

Titus Howe was a joiner by trade whose wealth lay in his sons but not in dollars. He met misfortune. He bought land on the west side of the river with a view to putting up a dam, which he did, the first dam across the Fox. He put up a frame for a saw mill at the lower end of the island. However, the next spring the dam was washed away during a flood. Discouraged, for undoubtedly this venture had taken all his capital, he sold out to William VanNortwick, who moved what was left up to the site of the present Challenge Company dam.

In 1933, George Bird told how his father, a pioneer, worked on this dam and the manner of its building. "The log dam was built in sections called cribs. As the current is swift here a pier was built in the middle of the river some distance up, about half way between Duck Island and the East Bank of the Fox.

"As each crib of logs was completed on a big scow attached by a long rope to this pier, it was floated into the proper position by the use of this rope. When in the proper place, it was rolled off the scow, sunk, and spiked to the sections already in place, then filled with



rocks. This rock was dug from the east bank near the site of the dam. The entire dam was thus constructed from the east to the west shore in a semi-circle. Then the top of the crib was planked over and rocks filled in back of the dam."

In June of 1835, there was the start of another business, a very important one. At that time Joel McKee built a store along what is now Batavia Avenue between Illinois Avenue and McKee Street.

Fortunately, here, as elsewhere in frontier America, the Batavia pioneers felt the need of the church as well as the school and business. August 8th and 9th, the Church of the Big and Little Woods was organized in the home of Thompson Paxton, six miles southeast of Batavia, with fourteen members. The Church was Presbyterian in denomination, its name showing the extent of the territory from which the organization obtained its members. The church was organized by the Reverend N.C. Clark and the Reverend Ralph Gridley. Mr. Clark, or "Father" Clark, as he was called, was instrumental in starting twenty-six churches in and around Kane County. For five years, the Church of the Big and Little Woods had no house of worship and no regularly employed minister. Meetings were held in the homes of the members or in the schoolhouse.

Elder J. E. Ambrose, a Baptist; Reverend William Kimball, a Methodist, were workers contemporaneous with the above mentioned Presbyterians. An early historian of this period writes of them:

"These men traveled on foot or on horseback among the early settlers around Chicago, stopping where the night overtook them, and receiving the hospitality of the cabin without money and without price. Reverently asking the blessing of God upon all that they met, their lives were simple and unostentatious, their teaching plain and unvarnished, touched with no eloquence save that of their daily





living, which was seen and known of all men. Though of differing religious sects, yet no discord was ever manifested between them, but a united effort was made by them to show men the way to better things by better living, and thus, finally, to reach the best of all, God and Heaven. They were not only physicians for the soul's cure, but they sometimes ministered to the body's ailments. They married the living and buried the dead; they christened the babe, admonished the young and warned the old; they cheered the despondent, rebuked the willful and hurled the vengeance of eternal burnings at the desperately wicked. When other orators were scarce, the sometimes mounted the rostrum on the Fourth of July, and highfaluted for the edification of the people, like other patriotic mortals. Wherever they went they were welcome, and notice was soon sent around to the neighbors, and a meeting was held."

In 1835, Batavia was frequently visited by Indians. This was no cause for alarm for they were the friendly Pottawatomies. Waubonsie was their war chief. He lived on a reservation about five miles south of Batavia on the west bank of the Fox River. It is said that he had such a good communication system with his warriors that he could assemble five hundred men, armed and equipped for fighting, in six hours.

Different men of that day had different opinions of the Indians according to their experiences with them and according to their expectations. Not understanding the basic differences in the two cultures, Colonel Lyon thought them lazy and indolent. He had an experience with Neuqua, the eldest son of Waubonsie, and a great favorite with the settlers, that convinced him that they were shiftless. At one time Colonel Lyon, he of the potato bargain, thought he would try to get Neuqua to work. He showed him a field where he was



planting corn, and, staking out a piece of land ready for planting, told him he could have the entire crop off that piece of land if he would plant it and cultivate it. The young Indian was highly elated and promised he would start in the morning. Next morning he arrived as he said he would, but bringing with him twenty squaws, each armed with a big clumsy hoe to do the work. Colonel Lyon remonstrated with him, telling the Indian that was not the bargain; that he was to do the work himself. This he absolutely refused to do and said disgustedly, "Me hunt meat. Squaw hunt corn". And that was that. History does not record whether or not Lyon thought himself safe in making this seemingly generous offer.

Another day Neuqua was watching Lyon plow. It looked so interesting that, out of curiosity, Neuqua asked the Colonel if he could try it. The Indian grabbed the plow handles and started confidentially with a rush only to have his plow crash into a tough root which nearly threw him over the plow in a very undignified manner. His ego was hurt more than his body, but he let go the plow handles in a hurry, and, with a grunt of disgust, gave up the life of a plowman forever.

We are indebted to Samuel McCarty, who arrived in Aurora, seven miles south of Batavia, in 1834, he and his brother being the first two settlers there, for an excellent description of the Indians that lived in this vicinity.

"It was not a wild, desolate, unpopulated region, for we had plenty of neighbors in the red men, who had occupied and enjoyed these beautiful prairies and rivers for many and many a year before this and the village of the head war chief of the Pottawatomie nation was but a little over a mile north of us. On the west side of the river, on the bluff opposite Mr. Tanner's stone farm house and a



little north, was the Indian burying ground, a part of which is now occupied by the Catholics for the same purpose. The village and vicinity contained from 300 to 500 Indians, and we had many visits from them. Quite a commercial trade sprang up between us, especially swapping bread and tobacco for fish, of which we soon found that they had much the largest supply, although we could give but one slice for a fish weighing from three to five pounds, and then at times they would have several in their canoes to take back. The treaty with our government for the purchase of their reservation had been ratified, I think, about a year previous and consequently they were peaceful and friendly.

"The old chief, Waubonsie, was a large and powerful man, six foot four inches, weighing about 200 pounds, and as straight as-- an Indian. Most of their village was composed of movable or temporary wigwams, as the tribe was a wandering and unsettled people. They spent their summers here on the Fox River and emigrated to the South to spend the winter on the Illinois and Kankakee Rivers, returning in the spring. The old chief's wigwam, being the capitol of the tribe, was built very substantially, apparently to stand for centuries, the posts and frames being of red cedar. The 'Palace' was built with a good deal of mechanical skill, although the mortises through the posts for the girders were chopped with their tomahawks, but in much better style than we would think possible with such a tool. The building, I think, was about twenty feet wide by thirty feet long. It was built by setting the posts firmly in the ground, forming four bents, with girders overhead and a ridge pole. The principal rafters and cross bearers were very ingeniously put together to gain strength to withstand the heavy gales of the prairies. There was a hall about eight or ten feet wide, running through the building





with a door at each end. On each side were girders, about one and a half feet from the ground and on these were placed small poles. On them was placed wide bark taken from the basswood tree, which formed their mattresses or spring beds. These were covered with skins of animals they had slain, such as wolves, lynx, wildcats and deer. Thus they formed their beds with government blankets or buffalo skins for covering. They built their fire in the center of the hall and would gather in a circle around it to hold their war councils. The outside of this capitol was covered with the bark of the linn or basswood tree taken from the standing trees, fitted to the sides and roof, very nice and tight. It was fastened by cutting three-cornered holes through the bark and tying to the cross rafters with the inside bark of young basswood trees. The rafters and all of the cross rafters were small straight poles with the bark peeled off, which made them appear neat and comely.

"The ladies of honor were quite fond of ornaments and jewelry, generally consisting of nicely worked and ornamented moccasins. The ornaments consisted of the dew-claw or small hoof of the deer which was a beautiful shining black. These were strung so that they had the appearance of small bells. They admired leather fringe and tassels. The principal garment was a skirt, formed of a piece of blue broadcloth, just as it was cut from the piece, about two yards long. They ran a small cord in the fold (being of double width) wrapped it around their waist and fastened with the cord. This made a very nice rig, nearly the same size at the top and bottom, but not quite as much pull-back as the present style (1875). The upper garment or waist, was made of dark blue calico, fashioned very much like a man's plain shirt, without a collar, and reached a little below the waist. The upper classes ornamented this garment



considerably, generally with silver brooches. I have seen two rows of these set so closely that they would nearly touch each other; one row around the neck, the other near the shoulder, coming together at the front. The brooches were of solid silver, the smaller about the size of a silver half-dollar; the others a little larger than the old fashioned silver dollar. They were a little convex, with an engraved border on the outer edge, and pins to fasten them. I think I have seen from forty to fifty on one person; also as many as ten to twelve brass wristlets on one arm, covering the wrist for about two inches. The bonnet, when any was worn, consisted of a man's old-fashioned fur hat, with a silver band from one to two inches wide around the hat and a few hawk or eagle feathers tucked under the band. The hair, braided, hung down the back, with a large bunch of feathers at the end. Over their shoulders, and sometimes over the head, they wore a large mackinaw blanket. This comprised a first-class style of costume."

Captain G. B. Dodson, who with Clybourn had established a dam, mill and Indian trading post on Mill Creek seems to have gotten along well with the Indians, also. An old hunter from Michigan named Caldwell was kept in the swamps to contact the redskins there at the same time that a young Indian chief was kept at the post to act as interpreter and to teach the American clerk his language. Captain Dodson came to speak the Pottawatomie tongue quite fluently, but Waubonsie never stooped to learn the language of the conquerors. Captain Dodson knew both Shabbona and Waubonsie well. The former lived most of his life in a grove near DeKalb, although he died near Morris among his friends. The latter, so Dodson said, was a majestic figure, who always carried a long spear as a badge of his exalted position.



The trading post at Clybournville was usually filled with skins to be sold or exchanged, but this profitable business was terminated after only a couple of years, for Dodson and Clybourne were given a contract by the government to remove these Indians to the new reservation near Council Bluffs where the rest of the Illinois Indians had already been sent. The contract made the following stipulations; "The captain was to furnish all of the horse teams required, the wagons were to be strong, well made, each to be drawn by two good horses and to carry 1500 pounds. They were to be covered with an oiled cover to keep the contents of the wagon dry. Each wagon was to be equipped with an axe or hatchet, a hammer, nails and further shall travel twenty miles daily if required on the outward trip, for which pay was made by the day. On the return trip, payment was made for each twenty miles of travel, reckoning the shortest distance back".

When Captain Dodson came, on a given morning, to move the Indians, only a portion and not all of the Indians, as Waubonsie had promised, were ready to start on their long journey. Waubonsie with some of his warriors and his squaws could not be found. Uncertain what was best to do, Dodson, nevertheless, gathered all of the Indians he could find into his wagons and started west. After traveling for several days the fact that he had not succeeded in getting all of the Indians to go with him so disturbed him that he and three other men, with their teams, returned. They surprised Waubonsie and his men in camp. Waubonsie was still reluctant to leave in spite of his former promise to do so. Finally, the white men, by means of presents, enticed the women into the wagons and got ready to leave. This was too much for Waubonsie! Taking one last look over the beautiful Fox Valley, he and his remaining warriors took their





places in the line of march, following their squaws!

It seems that when an Indian fought against the aggression of the invaders, he was driven from the land, as Black Hawk was. If an Indian cooperated with the white men, fought with them, befriended them, and saved their lives as did Shabbona and Waubonsie, they were driven from the land, too. We know a little more about their later experiences. Waubonsie returned to his homeland, the old McNamara farm, to say goodbye to the valley and his friends just once again a couple of years after his rather precipitous departure. There is no monument to him except in the name of the city of Aurora. Aurora had wanted to take the old chief's name, but could not because there was another (now forgotten) community by that name. So they chose the name of Aurora, which means "morning light", as does Waubonsie. Neuqua may not have won the good opinion of Lyon in Lyon's vain attempt to "civilize" the Indian, but he did win the respect of the white men in Kansas when he fought to quell the Indian rebellion there. The name of Shabbona appears time and again. Out in Johnson's Mound there is a huge tree, by far the biggest one in northern Illinois, called the Shabbona elm. The local boy scout council has adopted that name. Not far from here, close to DeKalb, are the towns of Shabbona and Shabbona Grove. Shabbona was granted the latter as his own personal property by the government. He had gone to Kansas with his people, where he had several unpleasant experiences, only to return to an unpleasant experience in Illinois. During his absence, his beloved grove was confiscated. Fortunately, friends in Morris, Illinois, gave him haven in woods there, where he lived until he died. In Oregon, Illinois, there is a statue honoring Black Hawk, for he had greatness too.



In these early years the stream of migrants was strong and presistent. There was a tendency for newcomers from New York and New England to buy out the earlier claims of Hoosiers from Indiana or southern Illinois. All of them had a strong sense of responsibility as evidenced by their attention to religious and political matters, although it is true that the early establishment of churches and of means of self-government was almost instinctive in all frontier America. In 1836, this three year old hamlet acquired two more church organizations that were to thrive and be a blessing to the community for all time to come. On June 16th the Baptist Church was organized as the Regular Baptist Church of Christ at Big Woods, Fox River, with thirteen members. It was some years before they had a regular meeting house, hence they held their services either at homes, the school house, or later in the Congregational Church when that meeting house was built. Also, the same year, the Methodist Church was organized in the home of the William VanNortwicks. They had no regular minister for some time, but were served by circuit-riders.

Also on January of 1836, by an act of the Illinois General Assembly, Kane County was organized to include all of the present Kane and DeKalb counties and the three northern townships of Kendall County, making thirty-six townships in all. The county was named for Elias K. Kane, United States Senator from Illinois from 1825 to 1835. On June 4, the first county election was held in the log cabin of James Herrington at Geneva, at which time 180 votes were polled. The first tax was levied, a personal tax only, as real estate was not taxable until 1847, five years after the public land sales of 1842. Of course, there was very little personal property to tax in those



days, but the tax problem was solved in the following fashion; be it "ordered that a tax be levied on town lots, if such lots be not taxed by the trustees of such towns, on slaves and indentured or registered negro or mulatto servants, on pleasure carriages, on distilleries, on all horses, mares, mules, and neat cattle above three years old, and on watches and all kinds of personal property of every name, kind and description whatsoever." Moreover, every able-bodied man between the ages of twenty-one and fifty years was required to work on the public roads for three days of every year. There is no evidence that there was any objection to this form of tax where the benefits were so obvious, but, being human, no doubt they did grumble at times. Neither is there any evidence of there ever being slaves in Batavia, or in all Kane County for that matter, although there were some slavery sympathizers.

As for voting, the county was divided into precincts for voting purposes. Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles and some of the surrounding country were all included in the Sandusky precinct. The first election was held in the home of Judge Wilson. Ira Minard of St. Charles and E.S. Town of Batavia were elected Justices of the Peace. That year, also, the Batavia lawyer, J.W. Churchill, was elected State Senator. There were several practices that would seem queer to the modern voters. Since it was previous to the Australian ballot, every man, as he went to the polls, had to declare the man of his choice for every position by a voice vote. This was recorded in the poll list opposite his name. Also, strange as it may seem, any citizen of the county could vote wherever he happened to be on the day of election!

1837

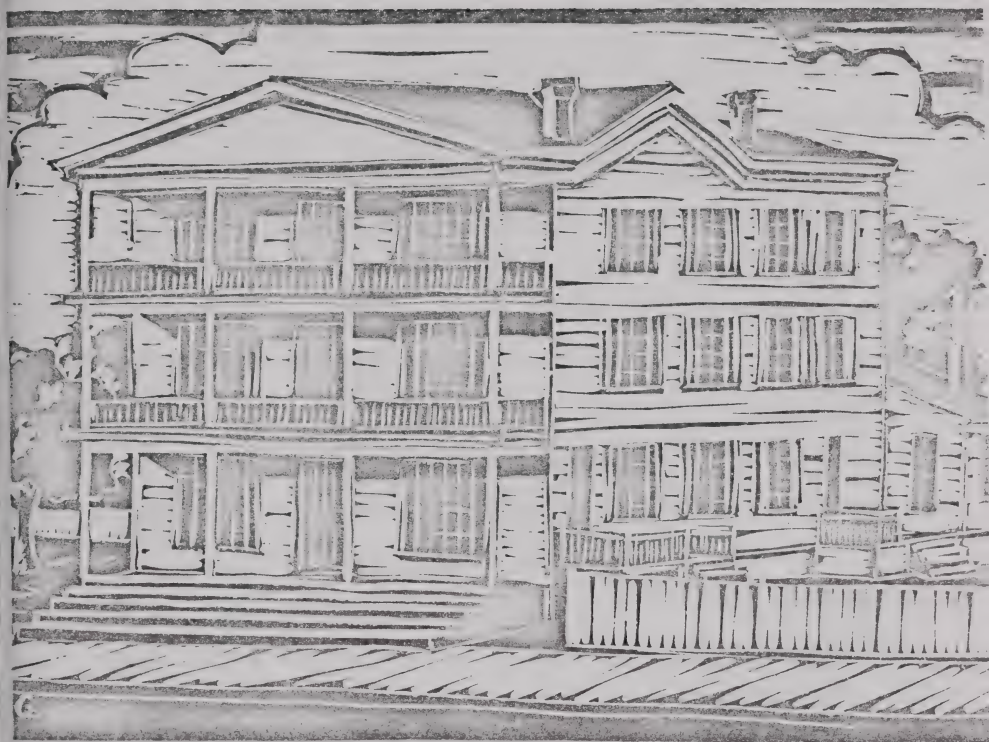
1837 saw Batavians depart from the haphazard cabin-raising



The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the  
familiarity of the air. It was the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of London, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of New York, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Paris. It was the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Rome, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Athens, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Jerusalem. It was the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Baghdad, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Cairo, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Damascus. It was the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Aleppo, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Hama, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Latakia. It was the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Tartus, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Idlib, the same as the air I had  
breathed in the city of Idlib.

The second thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the  
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seen in the city of Latakia. They were the same as the people I had  
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seen in the city of Idlib.

The third thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the  
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seen in the city of Tartus, the same as the buildings I had  
seen in the city of Idlib, the same as the buildings I had  
seen in the city of Idlib.



The Old Revere House.  
Torn down in 1939.



THE SCHOOL

methods of pioneers. Each settler had been careful to build his home and establish his claim at quite a distance from other claims so that there would be little likelihood of over-lapping, without any regard to order or design. In this year, the first plat of Batavia was made on the east side by VanNortwick, Barker, House and Company, with John VanNortwick doing the surveying. Batavia began to look like a town.

The year of 1837 there was some very important construction. The first bridge was built across the Fox about where the present east side bridge now is. It was paid for, not by taxes, but by subscription. It was a wooden structure built by Howard Brothers of St. Charles. Because the piles could not have been driven into the bed of the river very far due to the underlying stone, it was washed out during the first exceptional spring flood. Most of the early bridges across the Fox met a similar fate. The first hotel was built by Charles Ballard, who married one of the VanNortwick daughters. The first hotel stood on the site of the old Revere house between First and Main Streets on Batavia Avenue. This was the year, too, that the first court house was built in Geneva. Kane County was reduced in size, DeKalb being made out of the eighteen townships to the west.

Today, many Batavians find enjoyment in dangling rod and line in the Fox. They might never believe that a little over a hundred years ago one fisherman in the Fox, so it is recorded, used a four rod seine and caught ten barrels of fish in one day!

The tranquility and steady growth in this rural community were a sharp contrast to affairs elsewhere in the state and nation. The severe panic of that year was only slightly felt in this area. More interest was elicited, doubtless, by the fact that the state capitol was moved from Vandalia to Springfield, by vote of the state

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then proceeds to a detailed examination of the early years of the Republic, from the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence to the end of the War of 1812. This section covers the political, economic, and social developments of the period, and the role of the various states in the formation of the new nation. The author also discusses the influence of the Enlightenment on the American mind, and the role of the Founding Fathers in shaping the course of the country's history. The second part of the paper deals with the period from the War of 1812 to the Civil War. It examines the growth of the United States as a nation, the expansion of territory, and the development of the industrial revolution. The author also discusses the role of the various political parties, and the impact of the Civil War on the country's future. The final part of the paper is a conclusion, in which the author summarizes the main points of the paper and offers some thoughts on the future of the United States.

legislators. There was enough divided opinion on the question of slavery to have caused some heated discussion concerning the murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy, editor of the Alton Observer, by a pro-slavery mob.

In five years Batavia had become an entity. It had churches, a school, and several different ways of earning a living and of satisfying each other's needs. A small section was platted like a real village. The first settler had moved on--civilization had become too close for him. The first child had been born, a son to William Vandeventer. The first child death had occurred, the baby of a Mrs. Myers, who kept house for Captain Dodson. The first marriage had taken place, the daughter of Christopher Payne, Elizabeth, to Edward Trimble of Geneva.

Communication and transportation were becoming easier. Local goods were reaching out a little. People from many different sections of this country and from England were reaching in, all mixing and mingling. They were voters in an organized political unit--they were citizens. One phase of growth was completed.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE END OF FRONTIER DAYS

An infant, when first he feels himself an entity, is not by that realization grown, for his growing has just begun! In the spring of 1838, Batavia, having taken an inventory of her achievements, could take stock, too, of her problems and difficulties.

Due to uncertain land titles there were only about six families living in Batavia village proper, according to James Rockwell, who came in that year, although many families fringed the outskirts. Only a small portion of the east side was platted, as we have noted. None of the rest of the land had been surveyed so that the pioneers had no way of designating or defining their claims. They were not even settlers, really; they were squatters. All they could do was to keep a comfortable distance from their neighbors. However, they did know what they wanted on their claim so they tried to get water, timber, and good soil no matter how distorted this made their boundaries.

In 1837, there had been passed a Pre-emption Act, that was to help to get this situation corrected, at least in part, for this Act defined the manner whereby private citizens could secure title to public lands. Prior to this time, the land had not really been on the market. Under this new system, a citizen was required to file an application for the land he wanted providing it did not exceed one hundred sixty acres. He had to improve it; that is cultivate part of it, and live on it six months. At the end of that time he could buy the land for \$1.25 an acre, before anyone else had an opportunity to do so.

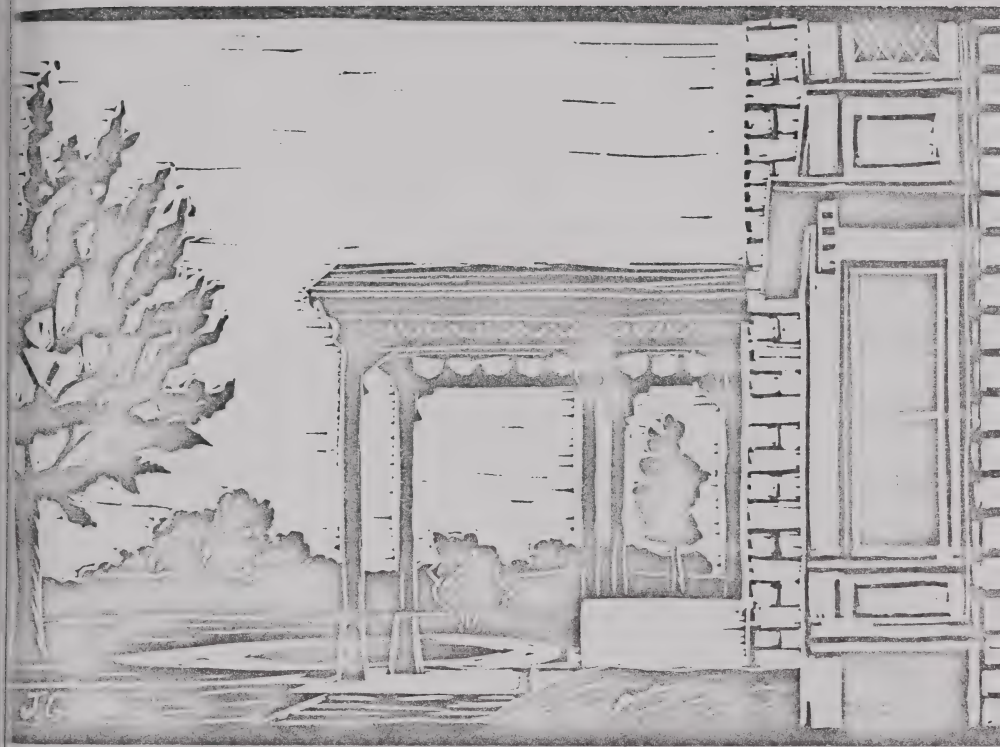
There were still some difficulties. No one knew where the section lines were, and would not know for a few years. The size of the



cultivated land was not stated. Many took advantage of this and enclosed a piece of land with a "rail fence of only four lengths. The ground enclosed was spaded over and sowed to wheat." In Batavia, unfortunately, some property was held by out-of-staters---absentee landlordism always delays progress. Sometimes a person would file for land under "dummy" names, or in the name of persons living elsewhere. But, as a whole, there was a code and an honor on the frontier that cannot be denied. The settlers banded together for their own protection against claim-jumpers and speculators. If a settler failed to file a pre-emption claim, his neighbors saw to it that he had the first opportunity to bid on his land at the minimum price, which was usually the \$1.25 per acre, when it was offered for sale. There were all too many speculators, who, knowing what improvements the settler had made, would bid up the price against him. Anyone building on another's land for the purpose of trying to get possession of it was called a claim-jumper. The primitive law of the pioneer usually determined that such persons were run out of town in a none too ceremonious manner.

In addition to the difficulty over land claims, non-resident proprietors, there was an unfortunate dispute over the ownership of water power between Titus Howe and VanNortwick, apparently. Some of these difficulties were unique with Batavia, some common to all Kane County, to all frontier communities for that matter. But in spite of them, immigrants continued to come, so that James Rockwell need not have been lonesome. He located and built on the lot immediately south of the present location of the Congregational Church, although this may not have been his first claim. His two daughters are remembered by many present day Batavians. Mr. Rockwell opened a fruit and candy store where he sold the first ice





Entrance to Bellevue Place Sanitarium.





cream ever sold in Batavia. He took pride in his fine orchard-- and so did the neighborhood boys.

In addition to these already mentioned, James Rockwell would soon have met J. V. Pierce, who had settled on a farm nearby, or Sylvanus Town, who had settled four miles east of Batavia. Horace Town, brother of Elijah Shumway Town, was here as was G.W. Fowler, Amos M. Moore, who was in business in Batavia until he moved to Chicago in 1869, and many others, or, at least some others.

1839

In 1839 another Town came to town. He was Dr. D.K. Town, the first physician, who had attended medical lectures at New Haven, Connecticut, and practiced at Hudson, Ohio, before coming to Batavia. Shortly after arriving here he wrote a letter to his sister, Mrs. Eunice Shumway back in North Granville, New York. The letter is now in the possession of Miss Eunice Shumway of Batavia. The letter has no envelope, was folded with a blank page on the back on which the address was written. There is no stamp, the sum "25¢" is written in the upper right hand corner and a post mark, showing the stamp of the LaFox (Geneva) post office and the date, December 14, in the upper left hand corner. LaFox was the early post office name of Geneva. The letter is enthusiastic, yet rather nostalgic in mood:

Fox River, Dec. 8, 1839

Dear Sister E---

I am delighted with the country abought here and am much pleased with the people. I think strongly of locating in this region. If I could prevail on the Col. (Shumway) to sell out and come here and locate, I would not hesitate about making this my permanent



place of abode. I am aware that you are very pleasantly located where you are and if I did not think that you might be still more favorably situated for enjoyment, I would not encourage you to come here. Brother S. (Sylvanus) has all the conveniences about him that you have besides many which you have not. You have had so frequent descriptions of this place and the situation of our friends that I will not describe it. I think it would be better for your children to come west. If the Col. wants my reasons for thinking so I will write him a letter and give them in full.....

Ever your grateful and affectionate brother.

D. K. Town (signed)

Dr. Town stayed here and practiced medicine, although he did not at first do much as he, himself, was not in good health, but in 1862 he retired from that profession to enter the real estate business. He built what is known as the H. K. Wolcott house, now owned by Earl Nelson (1962). He was a lover of trees and planted many of the beautiful elms and maples that make South Batavia Avenue, Union Avenue, and Elm Street long, green archways. His whole family devoted itself to the progress of Batavia. Dean of them all was Elijah Shumway Town. His brothers were Horace and Salem, who followed him to Batavia after his arrival here in 1834. Their parents were Benjamin Town and Mary Shumway of Granville, New York, where all of them were born. The first ancestor in this country was William Town, who arrived in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1630 so that pioneering was in the blood. Deacon Town had many titles. As we know, he was Superintendent of the Union Sunday School (1835) and Justice of the Peace (1836). He has often been called the "Father of the Congregational Church", because of his



service to that body. He was one of the organizers, one of the first ruling elders, and for years acted as clerk. When the Church adopted the Congregational form of government, he became a Deacon, and was known as Deacon Town by many church friends. There is a beautiful stained glass window in the church honoring him. However, church records show that twice, at least, he met opposition in the church. At one time some unknown but unpleasant charges were made against his honor but the church board finally cleared his name. Later, he objected to the church stand on not supporting missionaries that held or believed in slavery. Twenty-four members of the family were to become members of this church, although Horace and Dr. Dennison K. never joined, even though the latter grappled with his soul and sought the Lord.

To the townspeople, Elijah S. was Squire Town for he was a land owner and successful contractor. He built several of the beautiful homes in town. He built the white limestone house known as Lockwood Hall that he sold to Judge Samuel D. Lockwood, now occupied by the Rodney Brandon family. He built the house that the Judge's son-in-law, William Coffin, bought and which the T. W. Snows later owned. His brother, Horace, built the residence now occupied by Mr. C. D. Newlin. Elijah S. Town, Dr. D. K. Town, John VanNortwick, Joel McKee and Rev. Mr. Stephen Peet were most influential in building Batavia Institute, now Bellevue Place Sanatorium. How many of his achievements are lost to history, no one knows, but he had greatness, greatness that was shared with the whole, big family.

1840

In 1840, for the first time, our little midwest town was referred

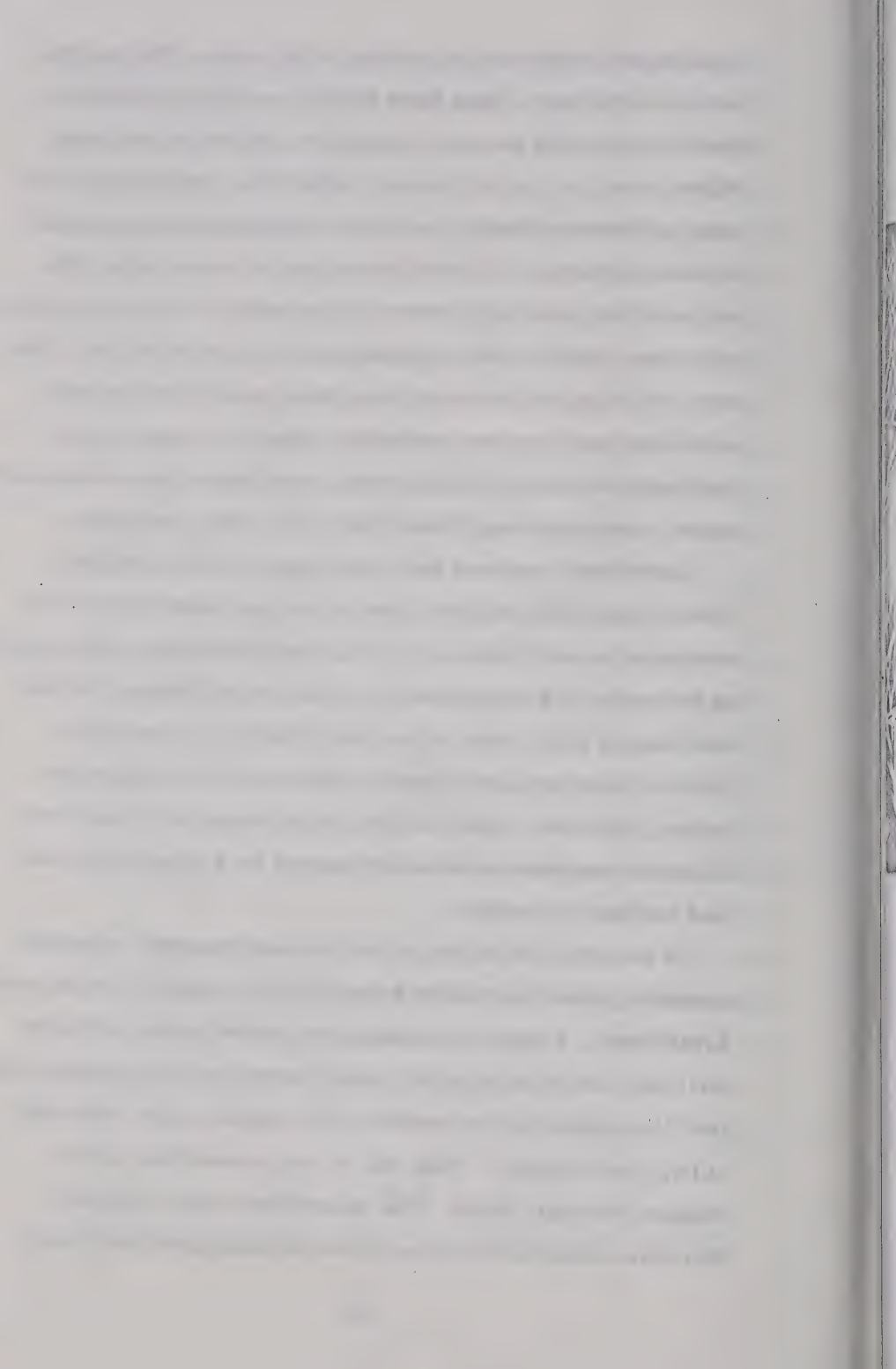




to as Batavia rather than as the Head of Big Woods. The man who had chosen the name, Judge Isaac Wilson, was himself honored by the village when the new street across the new bridge was named Wilson Street, as it is still called. Judge Wilson had been the first judge in Genessee County, New York, a position which he resigned to come to Batavia. His father before him had been a judge. His son, after him, was highly honored by the people of Elgin and Chicago as a judge, likewise. But the farmers did not think of all this. They were just happy that they could bring their grain to this new mill in this new town over this new bridge instead of having to haul it forty miles to Green's Mill at Dayton, near Ottawa. More shops and stores, especially along Wilson Street, made their appearance.

Government men were busy surveying in Batavia and Kane County during 1839 and 1840. Now, at last, one could discover the boundaries to one's claims. In 1842, Kane County lands were placed on the market in a government sale conducted in Chicago. We can well imagine that as soon as the roads cleared, or even before, farmers, preachers, storekeepers, mill owners, real estate promoters, all of them, made the long haul of almost forty miles into Chicago to exchange the necessary moneys for a clear title to the land that they had worked.

In the light of all of this, it was "deemed expedient" to provide a suitable place of worship in Batavia for the Church of The Big and Little Woods. A subscription paper was passed around; a total of \$471 was subscribed to build a church twenty-four feet by thirty-two feet "to be located on the east side of the highway a few rods north of Dr. Town's office." This was on the present site of the Hubbard Furniture Store. The subscription paper contained fifty-three names so that it must have included about every adult





Home of the McKees.



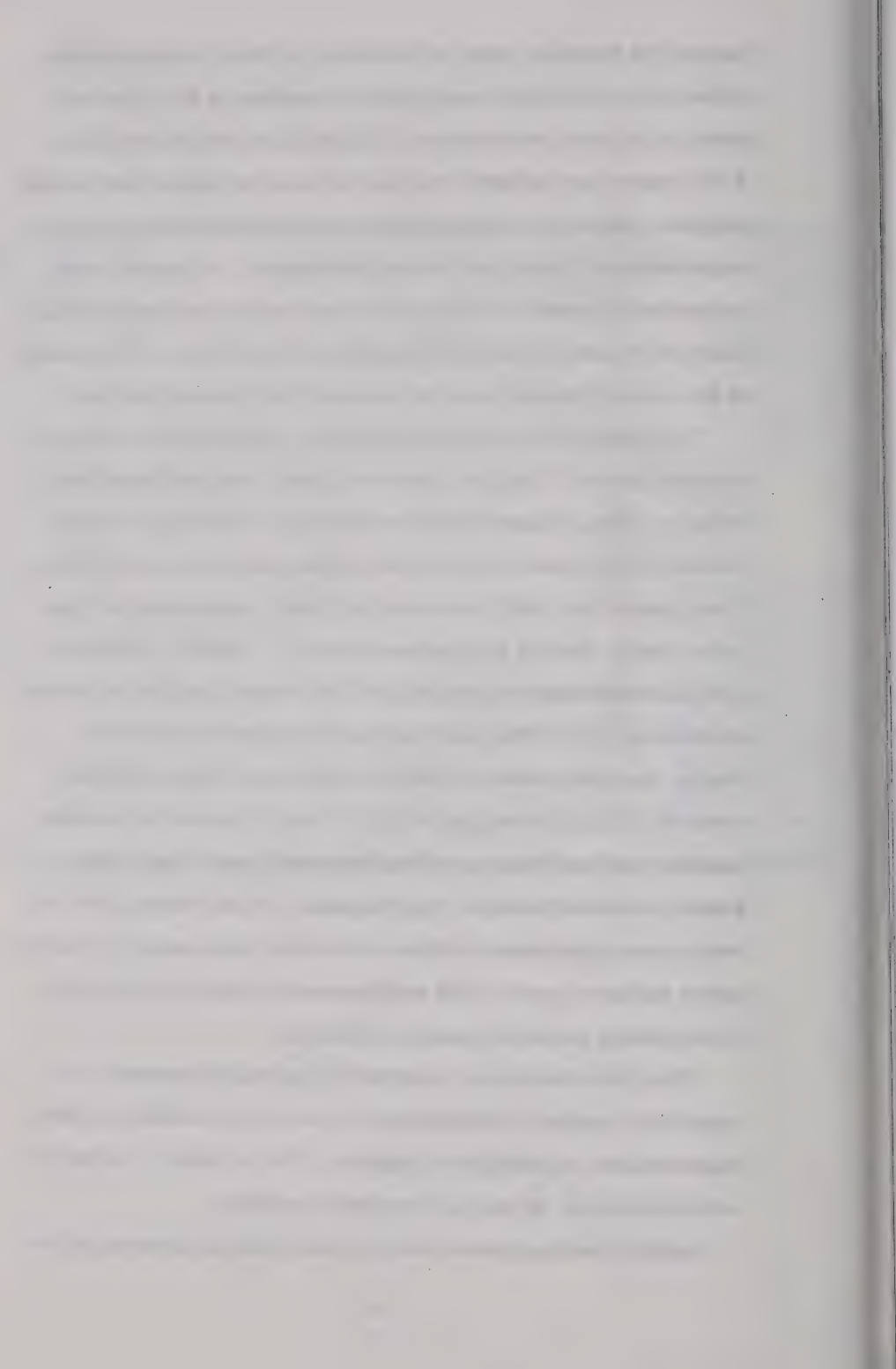
male in the township, some of them being of other denominations. In fact, there were only twenty church members at this time and about half of them were women! The donations varied from \$2 to \$75 in money and included donations of paint and lumber and similar supplies. Because of the community nature of the support, the dual organization of Church and Society was formed. All donors were automatically members of the society and were represented on the board of trustees initially in the person of Joel McKee. Even, today, in this church, deacons must be members but trustees need not.

The church was erected very quickly. On January 29, 1841, it was dedicated to "Almighty God-the-Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Because a Mrs. Elizabeth Phillips departed from church doctrine relative to the Trinity, she was excommunicated a few years later. They charged she held "erroneous sentiments concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, denying his supreme divinity." Another, a man, was also excommunicated on the charge that he was irregular in church attendance. Up to 1841, there had been no regular minister in charge, the elders taking on most of the church responsibilities. However, in 1842 as well as 1841, St. Charles shared her resident minister with this church, for the Reverend Lucius Foote came to Batavia alternate Sundays. The Reverend Lucian Farnum, who had been a home missionary in Illinois for some years moved to Batavia during the latter part of 1842 and became the first resident pastor of this church and of any church in Batavia.

This first church was supported by the whole community. It repaid that interest by permitting free use of the building to other denominations, especially the Baptists. For ten years it served as a district school. It was the first public building.

In 1843, two successive changes were made in the name of the





church. Early in the year, the name "Big and Little Woods" was changed to the "First Presbyterian Church and Society of Batavia". Subsequently, Thompson Paxton withdrew his membership to start another church in Big Woods, which still exists under that name at that place. Likewise, the church members, being predominantly Congregational, voted to change their association from the Presbyterian Church to that of the Congregational.

#### 1841

By 1841, Batavia had gained sufficient population to warrant a post office, which opened February 6, with Judge Isaac Wilson as the first postmaster. There is no record as to the whereabouts of the first post office. It may have been the same building as the election booth, that is, in his own home, on the east side in the E. Wilson Street area.

The post office must have been a great joy to early Batavians. These were not backwoodsmen, but educated people, most of them. They were used to keeping abreast with the times and to reading. They needed to receive their business mail quickly if industry was to grow. At first, Deacon Town and others used to hitch up their horses to drive to Naperville or Chicago for their letters and papers, gladly paying the postage fee of twenty-five cents for each letter. After that, "Daddy Wilson" carried the mail on horseback from Naperville to Geneva every two weeks. His mail was not very heavy, frequently three or four letters constituted his whole load for Geneva in the earliest days. Daddy Wilson was an obliging mail carrier and would shout across the river to a settler on the other side that he had a letter for him and to have the postage fee ready.

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On February 19, Kane County was again reduced in size, giving three lower townships to Kendall County. This made it the size it is at present, three townships wide and five townships long from north to south.

## 1842

In 1842 Batavia began to earn its nickname, the "Rock City". Before this time, Colonel Lyon had quarried enough stone for himself to curb a well, but other than that this resource had not been exploited. Now, Zoni Reynolds opened up the first limestone quarry, on the west side of the river. At first a few wagon loads and then finally hundreds of carloads of stone were to be shipped out. One has but to walk around the town to see that much of the stone was used locally, in these beautiful old homes in the Greek revival style, beautiful now as when they were first constructed; in this dignified church here on the corner and the store block across the street. Even those old factory buildings down there on the island are not ugly, quite the contrary!

Early Batavia must have been a queer hodge-podge of buildings. There was the stone, as has been mentioned. It is uncertain when the first frame building was built in the vicinity, although it was undoubtedly earlier than in many other villages because the Batavia saw mill was established so early. But long after there were fine big homes, and homes not so fine and big, built in a more "modern" manner, there were still log cabins scattered throughout the community. Today, the cabins are gone.

With the passing of the cabin raising, a communal experience that mixed hilarity and hard work also passed. Neighbors came with their wives and children, worked, gossiped, passed around any news

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they had heard, and consumed great quantities of hearty food and hearty drinks. The cabin, when finished, was admirably adapted to frontier life. In most cases there were enough trees on the claim to furnish logs for the cabin, although sometimes settlers would have to haul them from either Nelson's Grove or Big Woods. These logs were set in place, being notched and fitted into each other at the corners. No nails were used at that early date. We can still see in some of the old barns some of the wooden pegs they used instead. The cabin's roof was made of poles on which slabs of tree bark or shakes cut from oak logs were tied or pegged to the poles. As in all frontier cabins, the cracks in the walls were chinked with clay. The chimney and fireplace were generally built of smaller logs, plastered inside and out with clay. The fireplace was the center of the home, for here the food was cooked, cold hands and feet thawed out, and warm friends made as one chatted with one's neighbor or the chance passerby. Floors were either made of clay-dirt or of split logs. Wives whose husbands went to the extra effort to split logs for the latter, bragged about their puncheon floors. Windows and doors were made of roughly hewn boards slung from wooden or leather hinges. Furniture and some of the utensils were usually homemade, although the wife usually saw that some of her "things" were brought from the East. In most cases bedsteads were built in a corner on a wooden frame with a rope spring. There was no hot running water, but there was a well by the door, the air was sweet, and the outlook hopeful.

1843

On the frontier weather is more than a topic of conversation. The winter of 1842-43 was an extremely cold one. The river was



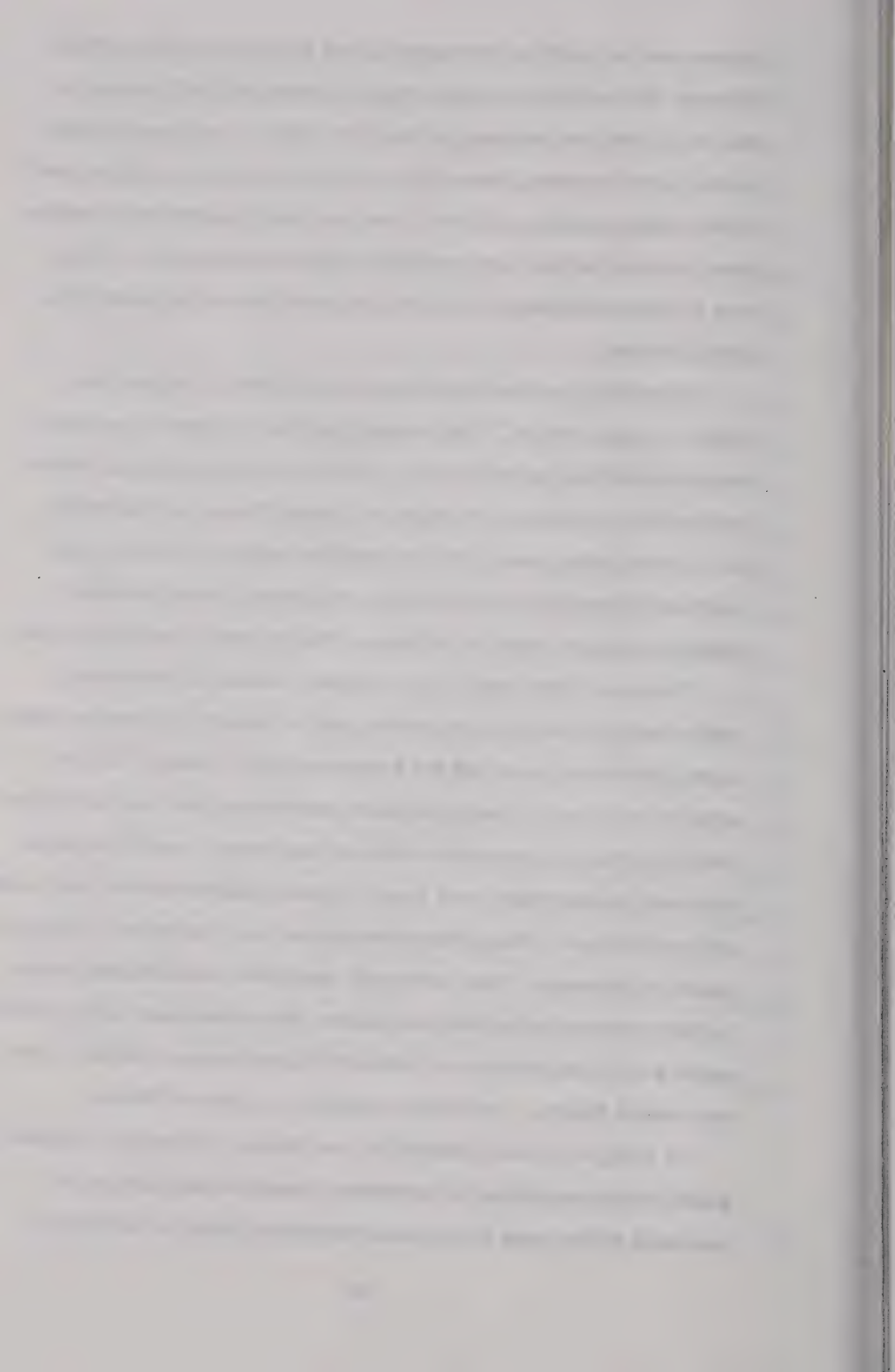


frozen over as early as November 4, and that is early for northern Illinois. Of course, that meant that they could just walk across on the ice, if they had business on the other side as was frequently the case. Come summer, James Risk, Joel McKee, James Latham, and a few others got busy and built a new foot bridge upstream to supplement the one that had been partially washed down the river. That was a great convenience until that, too, went the way of most of the early bridges.

To make up for the sharp winter, the winter of 1843-44 was called an "open winter." That made it possible for men to get more outside work done on their claim, and also to have some fun. It was not too far to ride out to the farm of Captain Hooker at Blackberry for a grand turkey shoot. It is related that while the rifles of the marksmen brought down the turkeys, the freely flowing whiskey gradually brought down the riflemen. The day was a remarkable one.

There was light snow, rain, lightning, thunder in alternating cycles ending up with a tremendous gale in January, frightening many of the Easterners, as it did the Vermonter, N.S. Young. "But" he wrote in his diary, "it being so much more roomy and level here than among the hills of our native state, we concluded it was all right for the winds to make their best jumps in these prairie regions, and soon got used to them." Sleigh riding that winter was limited to a couple of weeks in February. Their dirt roads must have been terribly cut up by their wagons during that soft winter. But spring came early. Wild geese were flying northward February 24, and farmers began to plow the ninth of March. And that is unusual for northern Illinois.

In 1844, when men gathered at Joel McKee's store for "boughten" goods and to swap tales, or to discuss important business, it all amounted to the same thing, there were many things to talk about.



There was the speed with which civilization was moving. The year before, 1843, so they might narrate, Lester Barker had platted a second section of the East Side. And now this year, the West Side was coming right along. John VanNortwick, the old gentleman's son who had a job in the East, had platted the new section. Queer why that young fellow didn't come west to be with his father, here where a world was beginning. Lots of folks nowadays think that internal improvements and other public works shouldn't be supported by the government. He's liable to be out of a job one of these fine days. So they might have talked, but most of all they went over and over the particulars of a great wolf hunt in January, when an area twelve to fifteen miles in diameter was encircled. Mr. Young wrote about it in his diary. "The center for closing and securing the game was in Sugar Grove township, in the Rob Roy Slough. A tall pole was raised in the center of the slough, from the top of which a flag with the stars and stripes floated in the breeze, and could be seen for a long distance. It was a grand sight after the lines were closing in, making a circle of half a mile or more in diameter, of men on foot, horseback, some with teams and wagons, with numerous tin horns, pitchforks, drums, flags and innumerable dogs, all in readiness for the fun. About a dozen wolves were enclosed, seven or eight of which were killed, the rest escaping. The laughing and hooting of the men with the yelping of the dogs, were indescribable, intermingled now and then with the crack of a rifle. As a wolf, under chase of the dogs, attempted to pass through the lines, the tin horns, drums and hooting would scare him back toward the center, soon to be caught, overpowered and quickly dispatched by the yelping crew after him. A few deer were started in the morning but escaped before the line was sufficiently close to hold them. After the fun was over, a





The Residence of Mr. Guy H. Conde.  
Built by his grandfather, Mr. Cornelius B. Conde, about 1849.





general cheer was given all around the ring and then the men broke ranks and started for their homes, going west, east, south, and north, well satisfied and well paid for the day's performance." The settlements were then near the timber and groves, the center being unfenced and open.

1845.

History may be seen from many different angles. We may focus our attention on the development of material prosperity and think we have told the whole story. History, for some, is a real estate venture or the exploitation of natural resources. For years, the stress and interest was in politics and elections. It took practically an intellectual revolution before we accepted the idea that social matters had a place in history. Now, many look for the growth in broad human rights when they read history. Certainly, we can learn a great deal about the nature of the peoples in early Batavia as well as the events in the country and world at large as we study the churches of Batavia.

In very few cases would one expect to find a Congregational Church on the frontier; that it was in Batavia is evidence of the New England background of the founders even though those founders lived in New York for a generation as the Towns had done. The "warm" religions of the Baptists and Methodists that became the soul and conscience of all the American frontier in the early part of the nineteenth century had appeared here in the very earliest years of the community. The growth of the ritualistic religions that characterized Eastern religious experience among the "upper social classes" was translated here with the organization of the Calvary Episcopal Church in the home of Mrs. James C. Derby in 1842. It





Calvary Episcopal Church.



Figure 1. The study area.

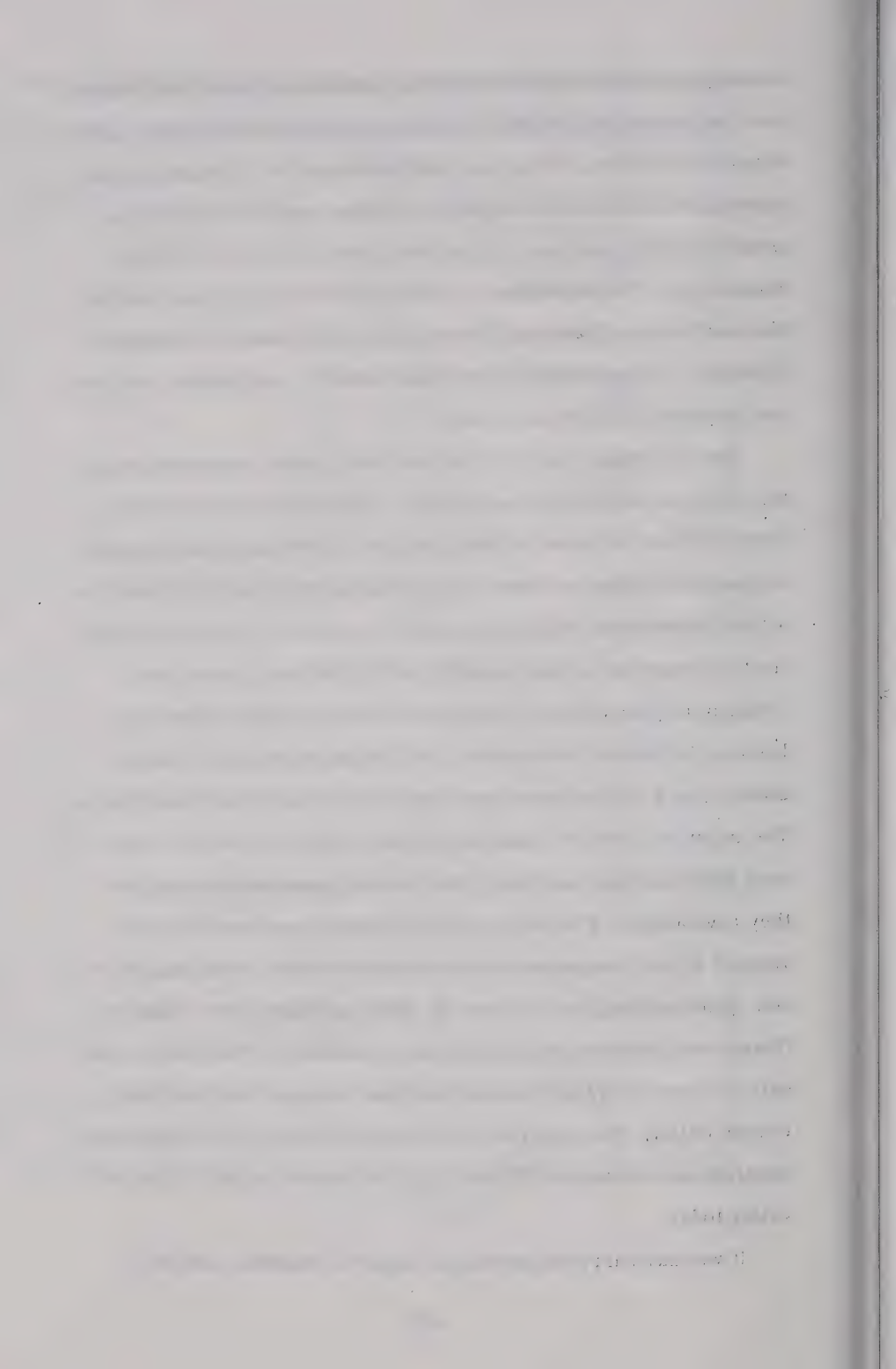


was not until the fall of 1855 that they could build their first church on a lot donated by Joseph O. McKee at the corner of Houston and N. Washington Streets. This was later destroyed by a tornado so that services were held in a temporary building east of the site of the present church, and later in the Buck Block, corner of First and Batavia Ave. On September 12, 1880 the first service was held in the new Calvary Episcopal Church, a beautiful building of Batavia limestone. It was built by John VanNortwick, the railroad magnate, and donated by him to the society.

The important thing in 1854 was that a priest celebrated mass for the first time within the confines of Batavia, the present Holy Cross Parish, in homes of Mrs. Bridget Barret and John Lonergan, respectively. Here we have the establishment of the fifth church in a little midwestern village, yes, but, here, also, is the story of the Irish in America, of their working on the railroads west from Chicago, of poor crops in Ireland, of Catholics and Protestants learning to live with each other. As for the church, for a time, Batavia, as a station, was cared for by the priest from Saint Charles. The influx of Catholics must have been relatively slow, for it was not until 1897 that they built that lovely white limestone building that they now occupy. For a time they had used the wooden church vacated by the Congregationalists when the latter moved into their new stone building, but on June 15, 1897, the Holy Cross Catholic Church was dedicated with elaborate ceremonies. The church was built at a cost of \$12,000 under the supervision of the Reverend Father Rathz. The structure is of Gothic architecture, seating four hundred, with a steeple 125 feet high that shines bright across the valley today.

If we may carry on our thesis about the churches and step



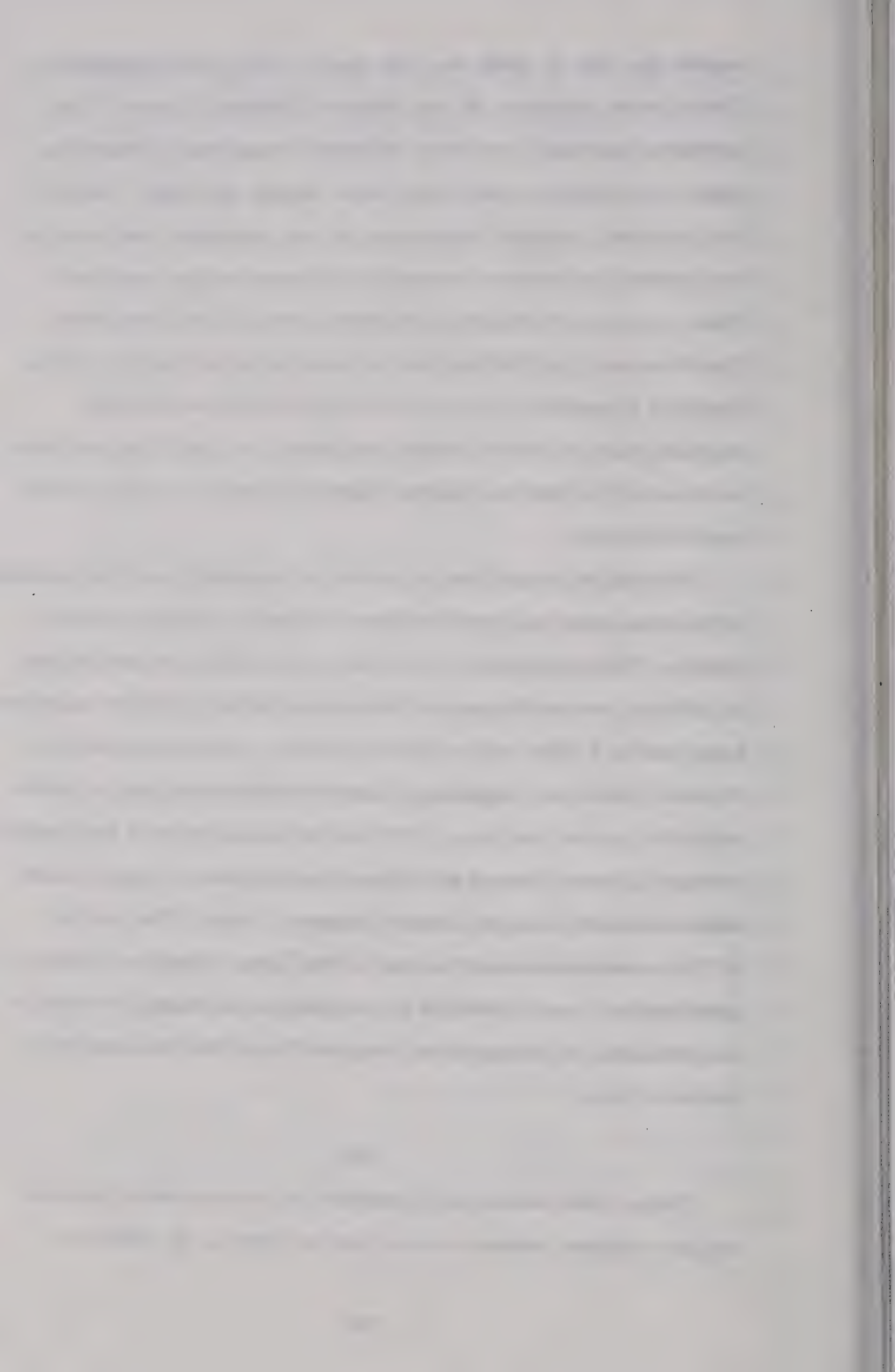


beyond the date of 1845, we find that, in 1853, the Disciples of Christ were organized as the Batavia Christian Church. The members migrated here from Western Pennsylvania where the church had started about forty years before that time. As for the Germans, unhappy experiences in the homeland sent many to this country to become responsible citizens in this new land. Those who came to Batavia formed the German Zion Evangelical Church as early as 1857 and the German Lutheran Church in 1882. Statistics do not give us the exact number of negroes that had migrated north to Batavia before and during the Civil War, but there were enough to form the Colored Methodist Church in 1865, the last year of the war.

With the building of the railroads, but especially with the opening of the stone quarries, great numbers of Swedish migrants came to Batavia. The magnitude of the influx may be judged by the fact that in 1870 the Swedish Methodist Church was formed, the first meetings being held in a little hall on Batavia Avenue. In 1871, the Swedish Mission Church was organized. They held their meetings in Anderson's Hall on the East side. 1872 saw the organization of the Swedish Bethany Lutheran Church with fifty-three members. Many of these were dismissed from the Geneva Lutheran Church. The year of 1872 is sometimes called the year of the "Great Migration" since so many Swedes came to Batavia in that year to cut stone to be used in the rebuilding of Chicago after the great fire of the previous year. And so it goes.

1846

Today, 1962, we are very sensitive on the question of schools and the relations between schools and the church. In 1846, the



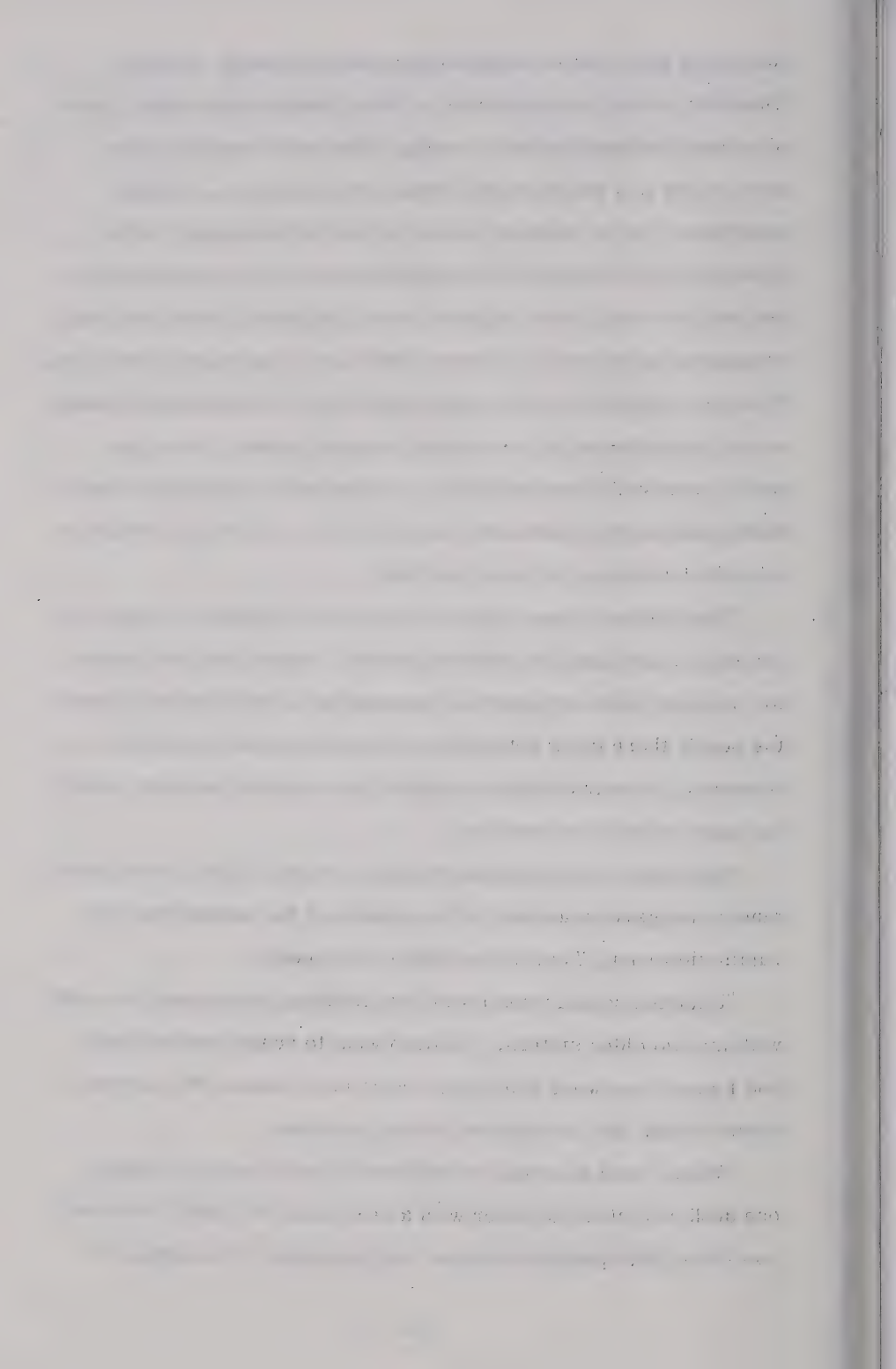
judgments were just as interesting as they are today. Alfred Churchill, school commissioner of Kane County wrote rather critically about the county schools saying, "Generally I would say the schools are in a bad state with some few exceptions..... These exceptions I do not make on account of the high character of the schools, but on account of the determination of the inhabitants to do the best they can. In the villages on the Fox River I have found that common schools were in a worse state than in the country townships. This fact I attribute to two main causes-first, an aristocratic feeling which is manifested by the number of select schools, which are partly sustained (I say partially, for there are so many that none of them could be well sustained); and secondly, a miserable sectarianism which destroys all union of effort."

Then follows a description of the schools in each township. He has this to say about the Batavia schools: "Batavia has two houses for worship which are generally occupied by a few scholars in each--the people there being not sufficiently agreed about the road to Heaven to let their children associate in one school on earth, under one good and efficient teacher."

Mrs. Belle VanDervolgan, who died recently (1948) at the age of ninety-five gave an account of the schools of the period from the pupils viewpoint. They did not differ very much:

"I started school when I was five, trudging the quarter of a mile with my two older sisters. Children went to school earlier then and I guess they were glad to get rid of me at home. We carried a dinner bucket and attended the all-day sessions.

"When I went to school we had double seats, two of us using one desk and sitting together with a seat mate. We used slates and how those slate pencils scratched and squeaked. At a signal, we



erased slates. Some used a sponge, but most of us had a slate rag, unsanitary and smelly .....

"We went to school with the Davenports, the Clarks, the Weavers, the Massies, and all of those good old pioneer families. But the teachers didn't think we were so good. Some of our teachers were James Prindle, father of the late James Prindle of North Washington St., Seymour Wolcott and Lockwood Coffin. Minerva Rockwell was another."

Mrs. VanDervolgen, the oldest native-born Batavian at the time of her death, was well known by her hometown people. She was the only survivor of the Daniel Fredendall family, pioneer west Batavia farmers.

#### 1847

Until 1842, at which time land claims were filed and paid for in Chicago, there was no real estate tax because all land was really government-owned. By law there must be a lapse of five years before such a tax might be imposed so that the first such tax was received for local purposes in 1847. A St. Charles newspaper of that time gives an inventory of Batavia's assets: "The superior water power, inexhaustible quarries of the best limestone, and abundant supplies of valuable timber from the "Big Woods", must render this place of lasting growth. Its moral aspect is fair, having churches of four different denominations - Episcopalian, Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist. It has one extensive flouring mill; two saw mills; one district school with sixty pupils; four stores; one grocery; two temperance taverns; one distillery; one saleratus factory; three blacksmith shops; one plow factory; eight or ten carpenters; three wagon shops; one cabinet maker; three coopers; one shoe shop; three tailors, and other mechanics.





"Population 412--of which 214 are males, and 198 females, principally natives of New York."

The writer speaks of a "handsomely villa-built street a mile in length", but fails to mention the wealth of the farming area around the village. New machinery was making this land more valuable each year. Four years after Payne saw the tall, reedy grasses, John Deere had invented the steel plow that could best the heavy sod of these prairies. He had his factory not far away on the Rock River. In 1847, Cyrus McCormick, the reaper manufacturer came to Chicago to open a plant to manufacture his machines. They found ready sale to the local farmers. A local shop was opened up the next year, 1848, by Benjamin Smith to manufacture reaping machines. He had purchased the patent for this in 1846; but it was technically faulty. He corrected the weaknesses, inventing the first crooked sickle, which improved the machine. After he had manufactured them for a few years, he built a stone factory along the river where the plant of the Batavia Metal Products was. Here he turned out as many as two hundred machines in one year, manufacturing them until 1857. Meeting financial reverses in that year of financial reverses he was forced to give up this business.

#### 1848

Increased business necessitated a finer network of roads and that they be kept in good condition. The roads in Kane County are mainly a result of evolution and not drawing board planning. Today, roughly about a third of the roads are straight section line roads. Some of the others were first buffalo traces, Indian trails, or cow paths. Of course, they all followed the path of least resistance, circumventing sloughs, groves, and hills. The Batavia-Warrenville



and the west side road from Aurora through Batavia to St. Charles are examples of these. Other roads went from Chicago to Galena, taking different routes through the towns in the valley. Galena Street in Aurora was a part of one of these old roads. Unfortunately for Batavia, none of these major roads ran through Batavia.

During the days of the stage coach, these were all busy lines of travel. One of the early inhabitants of this community, the Reverend G. S. F. Savage, related his trials and tribulations in going to Galesburg in central Illinois: "I had to take a private conveyance to Aurora, a stage to LaSalle, a steam-boat to Peoria, and stage to Galesburg, consuming three days of time, and as my wife accompanied me, an expense of more than one-tenth of my salary for the year. A seven-day continuous rain made the return yet more difficult."

Roads were bad, and, yet, they received plenty of attention. As early as 1836 the Board of County Commissioners ordered "views" of eleven roads to be made. For years this Board was kept busy surveying and laying out new roads. Every able-bodied man between the ages of 21 and 50 years of age was required to work three days every year on the early dirt roads, as has been said. The road supervisors in each district saw to it that the work was done satisfactorily.

The early dirt roads gave way to the corduroy roads, which were supposed to be an improvement. However, they were made of logs laid side by side with dirt thrown in between the logs to make a smoother road. The chief trouble was that the dirt washed out or blew away, so that driving on such a road must have been a jerky and jarring experience. The plank roads that were the latest invention in roadmaking in 1848 were only a little better. Logs were laid



down the long way of the road with planks three or four inches thick spiked to these stringers. These planks would warp and twist after being thoroughly wet and exposed to a hot drying sun. Riding even on these must have been a doubtful joy. The nearest plank roads were the Naperville Road, called the Ogden Road, running between Chicago and Naperville and the St. Charles-Sycamore road. 300,000 planks were cut for this road at Batavia and St. Charles, most of them coming from Big Woods. Such projects as these were partially responsible for the rapid cutting down of Illinois timber so that in a hundred years the stand of lumber has been reduced from 44<sup>or</sup>% to 5% of the total area of the state. As it happened, most of these roads, like the St. Charles road, were used but a short time before they were torn up for fuel.

Yes, the plank road that was to be the all-time answer to transportation problems was soon succeeded by the canal, which was to be the all-time answer to transportation problems. The Chicago Canal, (Illinois and Michigan) after undergoing the ills of the depression of 1837 was finally completed in 1848. Before it was completed, it was already outmoded as a means of transportation for both passengers and freight, for the railroad was making its appearance in the Chicago area. As we have noted, John VanNortwick, who had made intermittent trips to Batavia from his home in New York State, came here finally in 1846-47 and became chief engineer of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad. In 1849, track had been completed from Chicago to Turner's Junction, now West Chicago, and projected from there to Freeport via Elgin. This was the first track laid in Kane County. But the real jubilee came September 2, 1850. On that date, the Aurora Branch, later to be a branch line of the C.B. & Q.R.R. was finished from Turner Junction to Batavia. The forerunner of



1. The first group of people who are interested in the study of the history of the United States are the people who are interested in the history of the United States.



The "Aurora Branch" Depot.  
The present Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Depot.



this road, the Chicago and Iowa Railroad, had built a line to Aurora from the west and the Aurora branch was built from Turner's Junction to Aurora to connect with the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad. There was a grand celebration on that day with the whole town and neighboring communities turning out to see the Pioneer and one coach chug east to Turner Junction and thence to Chicago. In November the line was completed to Aurora. It served as a connection for stage coaches leaving Aurora for Rock Island and points west. Now one could do business in Chicago and be back the same day! The Batavia schedule would not have varied much from this Aurora one:

Leave Aurora  $7\frac{3}{4}$  o'clock A.M. Arriving Chicago at  $11\frac{1}{4}$  A.M.

Leave Chicago at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  o'clock P.M. Arriving at Aurora at 6 P.M.

Those trains were really primitive. The locomotives were wood burners necessitating long low sheds filled with wood at every stop. Frequently the passengers would help the fireman and crew throw on the fuel supply to keep the boilers going. Moreover, the rails were strap rails, metal strips nailed along wooden planks that would come loose sometimes, curl up, and come through the floor of the coach. And, yet, in 1871, not long after this a county historian would brag; "there is scarcely a village in the county, be it ever so small, but that its citizens can step into a 'Pullman's Palace Car', and in an incredibly short time be whirled to either the Atlantic or Pacific coast, while lumber from the pineries of the north, and coal from the mines of the south can be laid at the very doors of the inhabitants of nearly every city and hamlet."

Along with the railroad lines, came the desire for these new-fangled telegraph lines. After the failure of several companies, a line was finally finished during the winter of 1850-51 from Elgin



through St. Charles, Geneva, Batavia, and Aurora, to Naperville. This was only three years after the erection of the New York to Chicago line.

Yes, in 1848, big things were happening in transportation and communication.

#### 1849

The year of 1849 is usually thought of in the spirit of the "Forty-Niners." The spirit worked in some of the more restless souls among the Batavians so that quite a few packed up their belongings and set out for points west; how many we do not know. But many were dispirited in that year of '49, because that was the year of the great Asiatic cholera plague. It swept the whole country. Up to August 17, there were 4040 deaths from this scourge in New York City alone. In the week ending August 30, there were 48 deaths in Aurora and several in St. Charles, although St. Charles was hit worse in 1852. Cholera continued to be a dreaded affliction in Kane County for five years, although Batavia did not suffer as much as some of the neighboring towns.

Dr. D. K. Town must have been kept busy, though, because the early pioneers had diseases and sicknesses that we know nothing about. Intermittent and remittent bilious fevers were quite frequent, but seldom deadly. Dysentery and erysipelas were much more malignant and fatal than now. One family had three die at one time. They were "diseased with whooping cough and bloody flux together which took them off in a few days of sickness." Ague, sometimes called dumb ague, a malarial fever, was quite prevalent. Legend says that a Miss Squires had ague so "bad" that she shook the house so severely that workmen shingling the roof had to get down





off the roof. Undoubtedly, the ague was caused by drinking impure water and by the stagnant water in the streets, pools, and sloughs. Their cure was Peruvian bark and calomel in large doses.

And as if the year of 1849 was not bad enough, part of the upper bridge went out again in the spring floods. On March 11 and 12, a flood occurred on the Fox River, caused by the melting of an immense quantity of snow and ice to the north of us. All the bridges and dams along the whole river were either washed out or damaged.

Continuing in the same mood, a few years before this, in 1845, the citizens had met to make arrangements for procuring a cemetery for the East side. Two acres of land were purchased from G. W. Fowler at \$40.00 an acre. This land was all fenced and fitted up properly for cemetery purposes. Prior to this there was a burying ground in the block where the Barker home used to be at 508 N. Washington Avenue, according to George Bird. Later these bodies were dug up and transferred to other cemeteries. It was not until ten years later that the West Side under the auspices of the West Batavia Cemetery Association, secured title to burying grounds and fitted them up, enclosing them with a stone fence.

## 1850

The year 1850 was another milestone year. It was time for the next step in political life. At this time Batavia Township had a population of 892; Kane County a population of 16,703; Illinois 851,470. All this represented quite a growth in seventeen years. Naturally, as the population increased, the size of the governing political unit decreased. The final decrease in the size of Kane County had come in 1841. In 1843, all the county precincts were arranged to contain a single congressional township each. The



Sandusky Precinct was, therefore, reduced in size to include only Geneva and Batavia with the Batavia citizens going to Geneva to vote. There is rather a unique situation about Geneva and Batavia. Together, they form one congressional township, but, separately, they form two civil townships. In 1848, then, when the vote concerning the new state constitution and the two mills tax for the schools was put to the people, Batavians voted in Geneva. They voted overwhelmingly in favor of both: 1108 to 348 in the first case, 1176 to 221 in support of free, common schools. That was in March. In June, the Sandusky Precinct was divided into townships for voting purposes, too. At the regular August election for state and county officers, Batavia voted separately for the first time, casting 225 votes. Then the next year, 1849, the county voted for the township form of government. In the spring of 1850, the first Board of Supervisors was elected. Previous to this the Sheriff had been collector of taxes.

After this long evolution, on April 2, 1850, the first annual Town Meeting for Batavia township was held at the Batavia House, the hotel that preceded the Revere House. The following officers were elected: Meredith Mallory, Supervisor; Joseph O. McKee, Town Clerk; Daniel Hyde, Assessor; Jos. H. Whipple, Collector; John Gregg, Overseer of the Poor; Leonard J. Carr, L. P. Barker, and Marvin P. Houck, Commissioners; Joel McKee, Justice of the Peace; Jos. H. Whipple and Salem T. Phillips, Constables. Also, eight men were chosen for Overseers of Highways.

A glance at the minutes of the Second Annual Batavia Township meeting in 1851 will tell us the nature of their business and, also, inadvertently, a picture of early Batavia. It was voted at this



meeting, that "there shall be two pounds in the Town of Batavia, one on the east side of Fox River and one on the west side of Fox River". A. Smith was chosen Pound-master for the east side and V. T. Worsley for the west, It was voted to raise the sum of \$60 by tax to be applied in equal sums of \$30 each for the construction of these two pounds.

The following regulations were adopted in regard to the time and manner in which certain animals shall be permitted and prohibited from going at large:

"Regulation 1. Stallions, bulls, asses and hogs shall not be permitted to go at large at any time.

"Regulation 2. Oxen, steers, cows, heifers, geldings and mares shall be permitted to go at large from the first day of April until the first day of December, but shall not be permitted to go at large from the first day of December until the first day of April."

No wonder a man over in DeKalb got busy and invented the barbed wire fence!

So it was, that at the age of seventeen years, the Township of Batavia, having grown in wealth, culture, and wisdom, became a self-governing entity.





## CHAPTER VI

1851

Nathaniel Pope realized even before Illinois became a state that when the final contest came, Illinois might throw her influence in with the pre-slavery forces. The decision was a close one. As has been said, southern Illinois was settled almost entirely by slavery sympathizers. Some of these came north from their homes in "Egypt", as that section of the state is called, and formed a strong pro-slavery clique in this newer territory. Some of those who came from the East were certainly not anti-slavery men. But as a whole, both traditionally, and economically, Batavia and the surrounding country were more closely bound to the North than to the South. This is readily understandable if we consider the struggle on a broader basis than that of determining the conditions of labor in this country. It was a struggle between an industrial society in the North and an agricultural society in the South for political and economic control of the country. Since migration tends to go on latitudinal lines rather than longitudinal, the majority of those who came here, emigrated from New England or New York and were either grain farmers or industrialists. As for the farming interest, the South and the North both needed the bread basket of the old Northwest. The grain of this area was to convince England that she could not recognize the South when her people were hungry for wheat. Yet, except for the early canals, the Erie and the Chicago, grain from this rich prairie would have gone down the Mississippi River. Of course, the role played by the canals was supplemented by the railways as carriers, in the few years prior to the war.





Part of Plant of Newton Wagon Co.

Circa 1895



But, the shift of the grain center from St. Louis and Peoria to Chicago had great significance. Because of a more efficient transportation system, grain sold at one dollar a bushel in Chicago, while the two cities on the Mississippi not so far away were paying only forty cents. Immense quantities of flour left Batavia for Chicago, making a strong economic tie with the North. The industrial ties with the old Northeast were even stronger. With many, the issue of slavery was not as important as the principle that nothing must interfere with business. Tariffs, sound banking, sound money, a whole nation in which to do business-- all these were beneficial to them but not to the South.

We must never forget that Batavia was industrially minded and became increasingly so in the 1850's. Some very gifted individuals built up a variety of important concerns in that town. A few years before this time, an inventory had been made of Batavia business concerns. Many of these grew, while new ones were started.

The Batavia Mills that had first been constructed by the Van Nortwicks and then sold to Alanson House were, in turn, bought by McKee and Moss in 1850. Their production was tremendous for their day, for they turned out as many as 500 barrels of flour per week. Whether the management of the Mills was the VanNortwicks or the McKees, so farmers of that day said, the customer was always dealt with honestly, which was true of few mills where the people took grist to grind. The mill burned down in 1872 and was never rebuilt.

The saw mill erected by John VanNortwick in 1844 was busy in 1850. A planing-mill was later attached to it; the whole concern was later sold to L. Newton & Co.

As for the new industries, in 1851, the stone buildings south of First Street on the Island were constructed by the Fox River Manu-





facturing Company. It is said that the box cars they manufactured were hauled on wagons to the east side railroad tracks where they were set on trucks on the rails. It sounds like a very involved process. Perhaps that is why the business failed, for the expensive buildings lay empty for some years. In 1862, Howland and Company converted them into a paper mill. This, too, was a brief ownership, for, in 1866, the mill passed into the ownership of the Chicago Fiber and Paper Company, which went into bankruptcy. In 1870, the property was bought by the VanNortwicks and became a prosperous concern.

Horses were so important in those days, both to industry and to farming, that Benjamin Danforth was assured of business when he started manufacturing horse shoe nails by hand. He built a twelve by fourteen foot shop at the corner of College and Church Streets. He had an old-fashioned bellows-fed forge run by foot-power in which he fed the iron bars that he used for stock. He sold the nails by the pound, measuring them on a little brass scale. Danforth had been born in Sheffield, West Riding, Yorkshire, where he had been reared, trained in his trade, and married. In 1850, he had entered the United States, and, thence, came to Batavia, where he started his shop in 1851.

#### 1852

In 1852, the millions of crustaceae that had once lived in mid-western seas really began to bring dividends to investors. Lawrence P. Barker and J.C. Derby opened quarries on the west side. Mr. Barker paid \$1,000 an acre for his first quarry. Later, he bought five and one-half acres more at \$2,000 an acre. Much of the stone was used in his extensive contracting business, although shipments were sold to Chicago and elsewhere, too. This particular quarry is the present site of the city Quarry Park.



There were other quarries starting at about this time, too. The Shannon Quarry was south of town on the east side of the river. This later was bought by Frank Brady, who added limeburning to the other business. Cornelius Collins opened one from which stone of excellent, durable quality was taken. One quarry was owned by a man named Jenkins and another by Major Mann, both later owned by John Joslyn, who was chiefly a contractor and builder. I.S. Stephens later worked a quarry right at the limit of good stone, south of town. He, likewise, had many other businesses.

Without doubt, Batavia earned the nickname of the Rock City.

### 1853

In the whole slavery issue, no man did more than did the Honorable Samuel D. Lockwood to free the state of forced labor. He, an intimate friend of Abraham Lincoln, located in Batavia in 1853, the most distinguished resident of all time. In a biographical sketch written of him by his son-in-law, William Coffin, we may see his multi-fold interests and abilities:

"Hon. Samuel D. Lockwood was a resident of the State of Illinois from 1818 to 1874, and for fifty years was in the public service, holding during that period, under state and national appointment, the following positions of high trust and responsibility. In 1821, he was elected state's attorney by the general assembly of Illinois; the next year he was appointed, by President Monroe, a receiver of public moneys in the Edwardsville land office, and in the following year was elected by the general assembly associate justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois, which position he held till the adoption of the new state constitution in 1848. He was state trustee of the Illinois Central Railroad from the organization of that company



until his death in 1874; and was charter trustee in each of the state institutions established for the benefit of the insane, deaf and dumb, and blind. The foregoing brief outline indicates something of Judge Lockwood's standing in the state, something of the esteem with which he was regarded by his fellow-citizens, and something of the influence he must have exerted in that period of our state history when a few of our good and wise men were laying the foundations of those civil, social and educational institutions which have secured for us our present prosperity, and are a standing proof of the wisdom and fidelity of the great men into whose labor we have entered."

There were definite reasons for his coming to Batavia. In September of 1850, the United States made a magnificent grant of land to the State of Illinois of nearly 3,000,000 acres to secure the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad. This was accepted by the State, but to prevent any graft or corruption, the following plan was developed: "The state would convey in fee to the Railroad Company the lands granted by the United States and the Company should at the same time convey all these lands and all of their other property, in trust to three trustees to be held by them, first, to secure the state in all of its interests; second, to secure the payment of bonds issued by them to protect the rights of all other parties interested." Judge Lockwood, John Moore, late state treasurer, and Morris Ketchum of New York, for the railroad company, were appointed as trustees.

Under carefully worded restrictions the trustees were authorized to sell and convey to actual purchasers these lands and to apply the proceeds as directed. The land department of the railroad company was in Chicago so that it was necessary for one of the trustees to reside at or near that city. Accepting this position, early in the





year 1853, Judge Lockwood came to Batavia, where he remained until his death in 1874. Subsequently, as far as the other trustees were concerned, the responsible work of seeing that these restrictions were observed and conditions strictly complied with was left almost entirely to the Judge.

Important as was this position, of greater significance to the nation was his responsible work of seeing that the restrictions concerning slavery embodied in the Ordinance of 1787 were observed. Of him, Mr. Flower, who knew him personally said, "Our influential men and all who held office, from the governor to the constable, were from slave states. Every sheriff and every clerk of the county were pro-slavery men. Every lawyer and all our judges were from slave states and pro-slavery. I know of but one exception in the whole bar that attended our courts, and that was Samuel D. Lockwood." At the time that Lockwood began his anti-slavery propaganda about one-third of the state held his principles, most of the men of influence being in the other camp. John Reynolds, justice of the state supreme court and one time governor of the state, held slaves. Ninian Edwards while he was still governor of the territory, before it had become a state, held a number of slaves. He was most honored and had promised on oath to sustain the constitution. While Lockwood was on the state Supreme Court, the legality of the practice of slaveholding came before the court. The issue was tied, so that slavery continued. When the slavery faction tried to write slavery into the constitution, there were several anti-slavery papers started. The newspaper that Judge Lockwood supported, in part, was the "Expositor". Strange as it may seem, one of the most influential men on the other side was Elisha Kent Kane of New York, a northern



man with southern principles. He was rewarded by being sent to the United States Senate and having the county named after him. Judge Lockwood and his earnest workers were rewarded, too, however, with the defeat of the attempt to rewrite the constitution legalizing slavery.

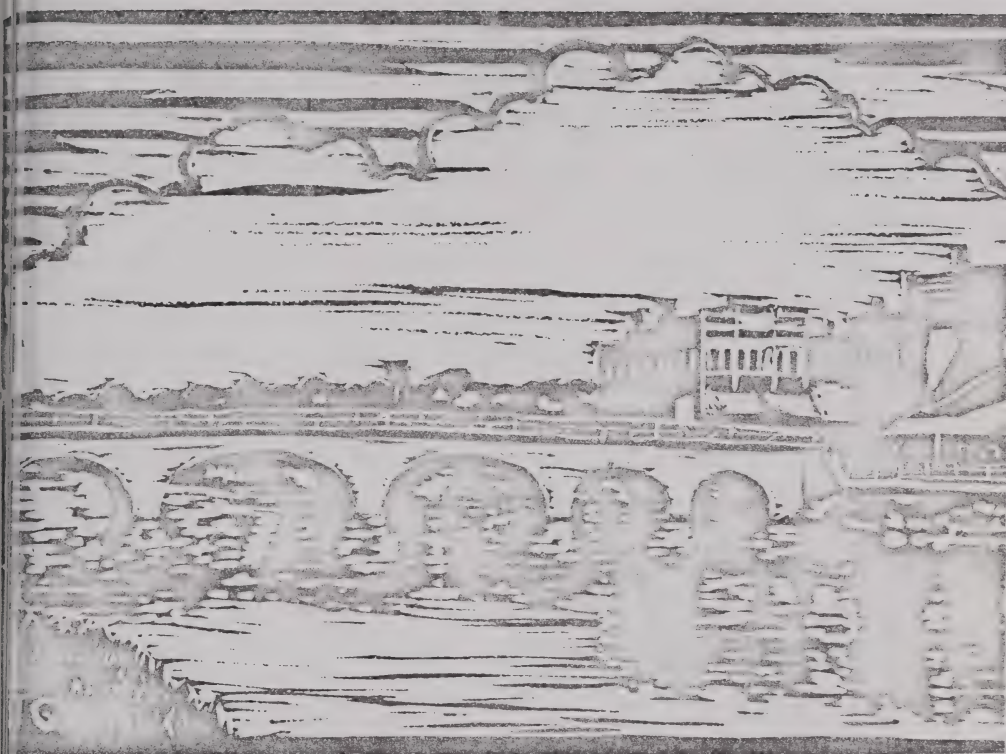
Judge Lockwood's fight for human freedom on the bench and in the legislature was supplemented by his contact with Abraham Lincoln whom he loved as a son. They were good friends. After he came to Batavia, he entertained Lincoln at Lockwood Hall, but he had known and influenced Lincoln for many years. Lockwood was very pleased that it had fallen to his lot to license the three men, Lyman Trumbull, Stephen A. Douglas, and Abraham Lincoln. Today, his examining of Lincoln for the bar would seem very irregular. They just went walking and Lockwood asked Lincoln questions!

Oh, yes, the people of Batavia can be very proud that a man named Lockwood lived in that limestone house half hidden by trees on South Batavia Avenue. He was not "strongly built" like Payne, nor an industrial promoter like the VanNortwicks, nor a contractor like E. S. Town who built his house (they were all highly moral men, though) but he was indeed a man who was truly great.

1854

When Batavians enter their public library to check out a book, they are entering what was once the fine home of one of Batavia's keenest and most indefatigable business men, Capt. D.C. Newton. His life history is practically the life history of the Newton Wagon Works, which has given employment to hundreds and hundreds of Batavia people. Levi Newton learned the cabinet maker's trade in New York State. When twenty years old, he started work at his trade and three





The Old Stone Bridge.

This six-arched structure, built in 1854, served until 1911 when the present concrete bridge was built on the same site.





years later united with his employer in a partnership. This concern failed, throwing young Newton heavily in debt. He worked and saved until he had paid every cent that the partnership owed. Trying other trades in several locations, he finally purchased a small factory at Attica, New York, and started to make wagons. As his business grew, he shipped largely to Wisconsin and Illinois, many orders coming from Kane County. In April 1854, his factory was destroyed by fire, which meant a total loss because he was not able to collect on the \$4,000 insurance he had. That meant he was almost bankrupt for the second time. Recalling that much of his business came from Illinois, he visited the Fox River valley, coming to Batavia in September, 1854. He looked over the north end of the Island, which was in wheat, and appraised it, with its available water power and the abundant timber up and down the valley, as an ideal site for his new factory. He purchased part of this land, built the race-way and started erecting buildings. In order to get seasoned lumber for wagons, he bought a log cabin on the west side, turned the logs on a lathe, bored, and mortised them by hand to make wagon hubs. The first year he and his son, who had gone into partnership with him, made only thirty-six wagons and thirty-five buggies. Later, his younger son, E.C., joined with his brother, Don Carlos, as a member of the firm. Later, still, Levi Newton's son-in-law, H. K. Wolcott, became a joint stockholder. It was well the losses were divided and limited, because disaster hit again in 1872. In December of that year fire burned the entire shop north of the newly erected three story office building. Since that was the year following the Chicago fire, the insurance companies could not pay their obligations, so once again the Newton company had to stand the entire loss, which totaled about \$40,000. However, the firm rebuilt the plant better



than before. Newton wagons became known all over the United States for their strength and durability. In 1887, they were making between four and five thousand wagons and carriages a year. They even became well enough known to have a song written about them. As for the company, Don Carlos succeeded his father as president in 1879, H.K. Wolcott succeeding him in 1893. He continued as president until the Emerson-Brantingham Company bought the firm in 1912. The Batavia Body Company grew out of this in 1931.

All this sounds like the All-American success story, which it was. Men such as these could never lend their support to slavery.

Private enterprise brought forth one other concern in 1854. A barrel factory was established by Hoyt and Smith into which a distillery had once entered unheralded and from which it had departed unsung. This company was shortly dissolved, at which time the property was purchased by E.S. Town. Here was produced first sorghum, then flax, before it was destroyed by flames in 1864.

#### 1855

An act which has been called the Magna Charta in Education was passed in 1855. The same persons that had fought for slavery fought against the establishment of an effective school system. Three per cent of the income from the sale of lands was given to the state for educational purposes; but the general assembly loaned these funds to the state to meet general expenses or squandered them on illegitimate projects. One section of each township was supposed to have been sold to support schools, according to the Northwest Ordinance, but the land was sold so cheaply that the money was all used up in a few years. A good school law was passed in 1825 that would have given educational opportunities at



public expense to white children, but that law was repealed four years later by those who condemned it as a Yankee Invention. In 1845, the situation was somewhat improved, for in that year school townships could tax themselves for school purposes if they wanted to do so. We know that the conditions were very bad in Batavia. Many parents sent their sons East to schools. Finally, in 1854, another solution was found in the establishment of the Batavia Institute, a private academy, built through the efforts of E.S. Town, D.K. Town, John VanNortwick, Joel McKee, and the Reverend Stephen Peet, the Congregational minister. The building itself is very lovely and set in spacious grounds. The halls alone are grand, with two hand-carved winding staircases leading from the front hall to the second floor. It was built of local stone at a cost of about \$20,000. As an institution of learning it had a good reputation. However, the educational law of 1855 which provided free common schools made schools like the Batavia Institute unnecessary so that in 1867 it became a rest home and a sanitorium known as the Bellevue Place.

In 1852, Batavia had forsaken its parochialism. In 1852, an unpretentious school building was erected on the west side. (District 5, from the Aurora Township line to the Geneva line.) Eight years later a more ambitious stone school was constructed on the east side. (District 6, from the Aurora Township line to the Geneva line along the east side of the river.) This, in turn, was outshone by one erected on the west side in 1867, a most "imposing pile". The school law of 1855 was needed to support such schools in a democracy.





There was much to talk about in 1856 as men gathered in the Revere House. Tempers were rising. Men who had thought that anti-slavery was a cause that only women and radicals got excited about were getting excited. They talked: Fugitive slaves are being chased right here into our own neighborhood by federal officials; that shouldn't be. Well, I told you that that would happen if the Compromise Act of 1850 was passed. I thought it would settle this whole fracas once and for all. You should have attended that Whig meeting in Geneva five-six years ago. That really was something. Sure, the churches here had come out in opposition to slavery, but for practical political leaders to come right out like that so strong against slavery got me to thinking. I remember the very words of the resolution, "the doctrine of property in man is directly opposed to the principles of our God, at war with Christianity and repugnant to the common sense of mankind." What aroused me was the way the pro-slavery advocates threatened the very safety of the anti-slavery speakers, tried to mob them. Now, I don't know what to make out of the Kansas-Nebraska affair. Don't know what that fellow Stephen Douglas is angling for. Does he want an office, a railroad pass, or what does he want? All I know is that except for him, there wouldn't be this civil war in Kansas. That mad man John Brown may seem right to some and he may seem wrong to some, but to me he seems just mad, out of his head. About his massacre at Pottawatomie, Kansas, where did that name come from? Oh, the Indians sent from here settled there in Kansas. Well, it is all too much for me. By the way, did you hear how the election came out? Yes, we're an incorporated village now. Orsamus Wilson is president of the Board and John





The Congregational Church  
Batavia, Illinois

Built of native limestone. Dedicated September 1, 1856.





Van Nortwick, Lord, Griffin, and Corwin trustees. It's getting late, how about stepping up the street and looking at that new building Squire Town's putting up?

After they had duly admired the new Congregational Church, which they would have known cost \$13,400, they may, too, have seen the limestone church that the Methodists had erected four years before. This is now owned by the Board of Education and used as a School for Exceptional children. They would have stopped to inspect the construction of the embankment for a roadway to be a part of West Wilson Street leading up to the new east side bridge. They thought they now had a bridge that no spring freshet could budge. This stone bridge with its six arches was the pride of all Batavia. As if on a dare, part of it was demolished that very year by a terrible ice jam. It was reconstructed immediately to last until 1911 when the new bridge was erected. Stone by stone the old one had to be wrecked.

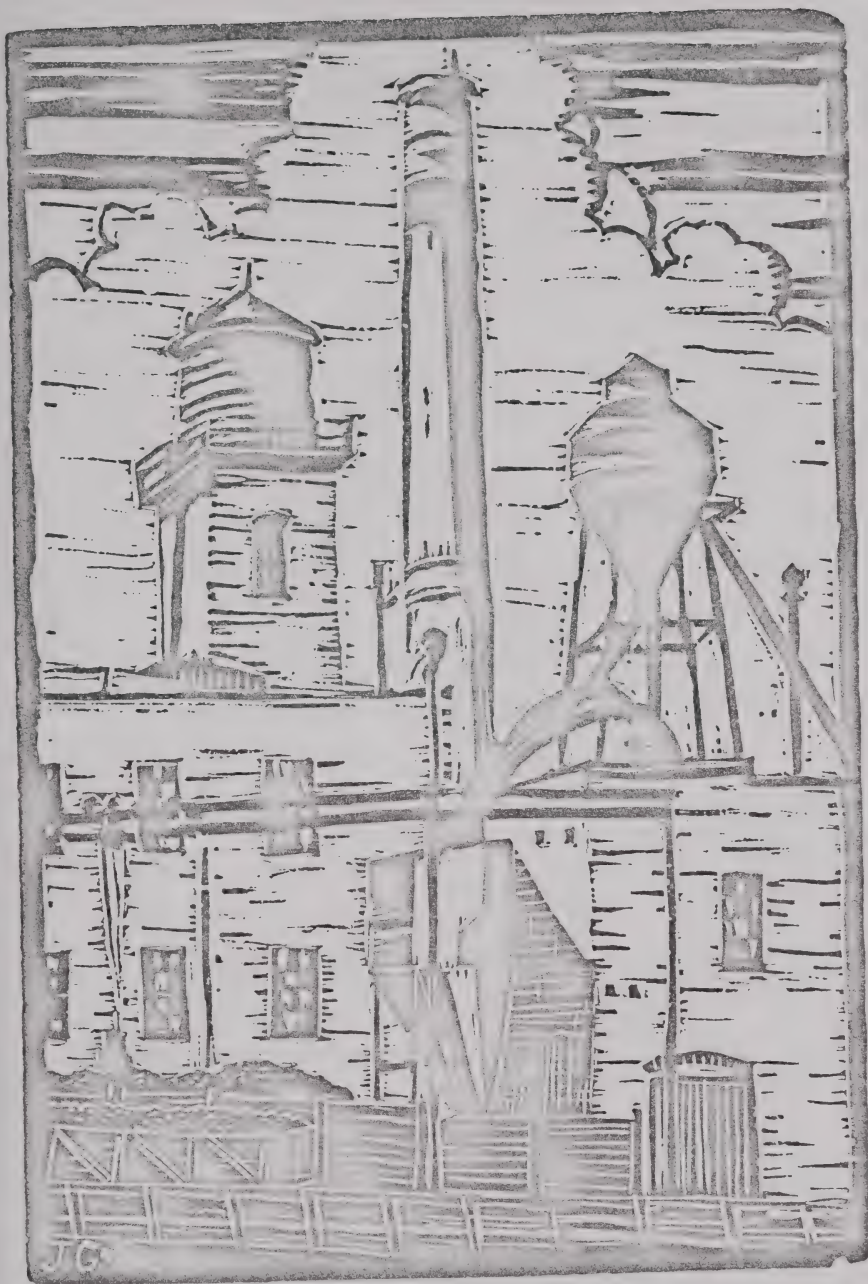
## 1857

In 1857, Batavia was getting ready to earn its title as the "Windmill City." On March 25, the first meeting of the U.S. Wind Engine and Pump Company was held in the office of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in Chicago. Windmills invented by Daniel Halladay had been manufactured by the Halladay Windmill Company in Ellington, Conn. since 1854. John Burnham was the general sales agent. At first he made his headquarters in Connecticut but later came to Chicago to be nearer the windmill market.

Mr. Burnham first introduced the use of windmills for pumping water for livestock and also to the railroads for supplying water to the locomotives. In that way, he became acquainted with Mr. John







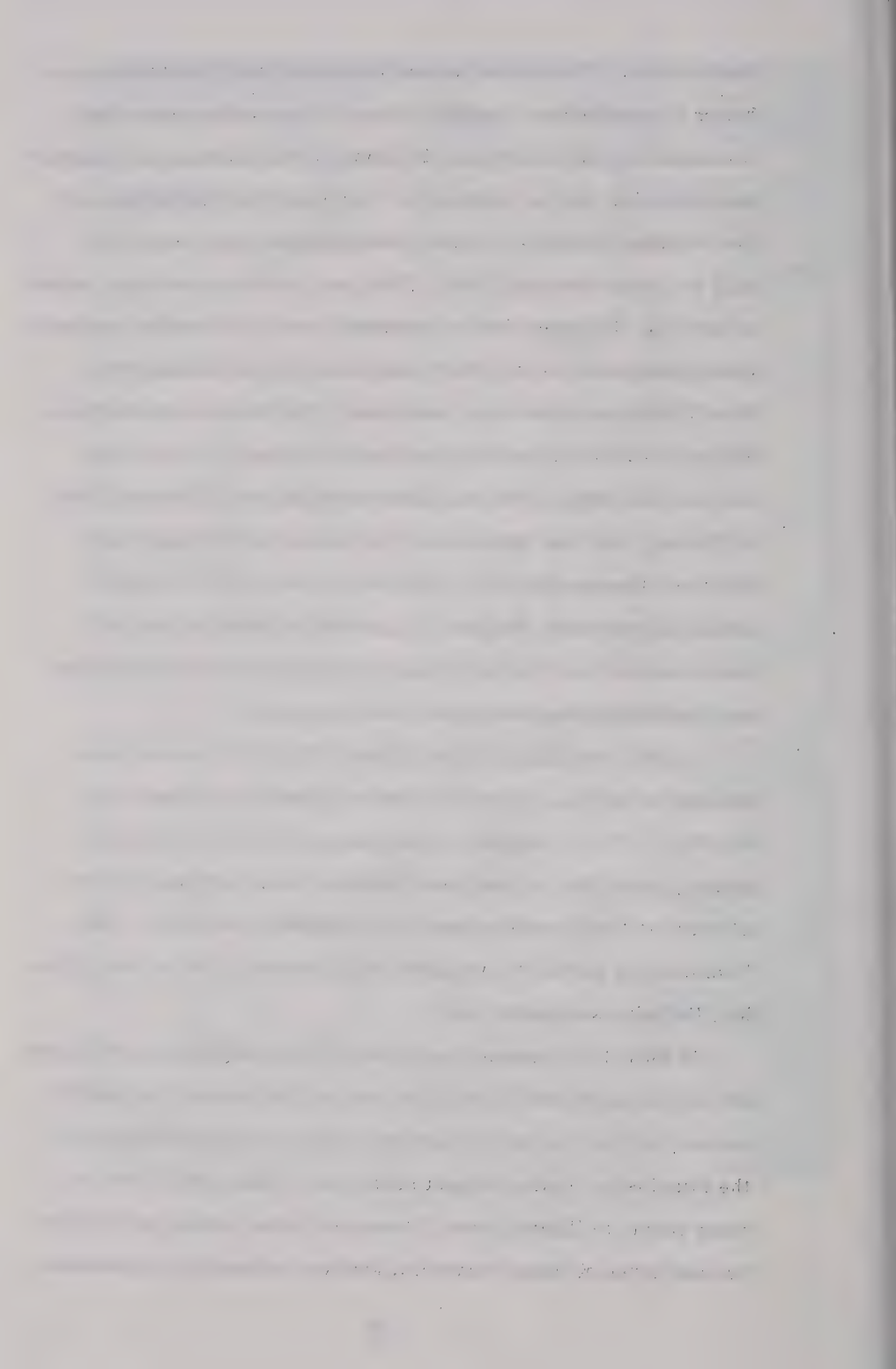
A small section of the U. S. Wind Engine and Pump Co.



VanNortwick. These men became convinced that it would be much better to manufacture the mills closer to where they were used. Consequently, the U.S.W.E. & P. Company was formed and incorporated with nine charter members. They took over the business of the Halladay Windmill Company, continuing to manufacture the mill in Connecticut until 1863. That year the whole business moved to Batavia. The nine charter members were all important men who contributed much to the growth and welfare of the Middle West. John VanNortwick has been mentioned. The others were Smith L. Mallory, who was a railroad contractor for the C.B. & Q. R.R.; Colonel R.B. Mason, who was afterwards mayor of Chicago; John B. Turner, who was president of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad; George Bassett, an official of the C.& N.W.; James C. Derby, a contractor; Stephen F. Gale was a capitalist and did important services for the Union in the Civil War; John Burnham and Daniel Halladay completed the organization.

In 1863, machinery of the Halladay Windmill Company was shipped to Batavia. After the erection of stone buildings, the U.S.W.E. & P. Co. started to manufacture Halladay windmills, pumps, feedmills, and railroad fixtures. John VanNortwick was elected the first president and Daniel Halladay, secretary. Mr. VanNortwick served as president until January 1879, at which time Mr. Halladay succeeded him.

By 1881, this company had grown to be of sufficient significance for it to be said that: "This is the largest institution of its kind in the world. You can hardly ride ten miles now in any direction in the Mississippi Valley without seeing one of their mills; and on many farms in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and other states you will see two and three of these windmills, that are automatic in movement,





and that are, year in and year out, doing the work so important to the stock upon the farm while the farmer sleeps. They are self regulating to fold themselves up and resist the storm or turn in every direction to catch the gentlest zephyr."

Working with the firm in those early days was a young man named Henry N. Wade, who was very good at "figures". Born in England, he had accepted a position as bookkeeper with this company in the year 1869. Gifted with an almost uncanny skill in mathematics, he quickly rose in the early eighties to be secretary and then treasurer. In 1917, he became president, a position which he held almost until his death in 1946 at the age of ninety-three. Under his management the company continued to grow and to gain prestige, only to be submerged in the Batavia Metal Products during the Second World War. Mr. Wade, in addition to his duties with the U.S., was for a long time a director and vice-president of the First National Bank as well as a director of a number of Chicago firms. He had married Sophie Carr, daughter of pioneer Captain Carr, who had come here from Maine and had built the two big houses facing each other on West Main Street road. Mr. Wade himself built for his wife a show place on South Batavia Avenue. Not far away on Washington Street was the Burnham house where the late Miss Mary Burke, a retired art teacher, lived. Nearby, too, was the home of Halladay now occupied by Miss Barbara of the B. E. Sperry family, on Main Street. The VanNortwicks had built beautiful homes on the block of land between First and Wilson Streets, now Board of Education property.

But, of course, the people in Batavia, in 1857, could not see all that was going to grow out of that new company. They did know that business was in a precarious condition all over the whole





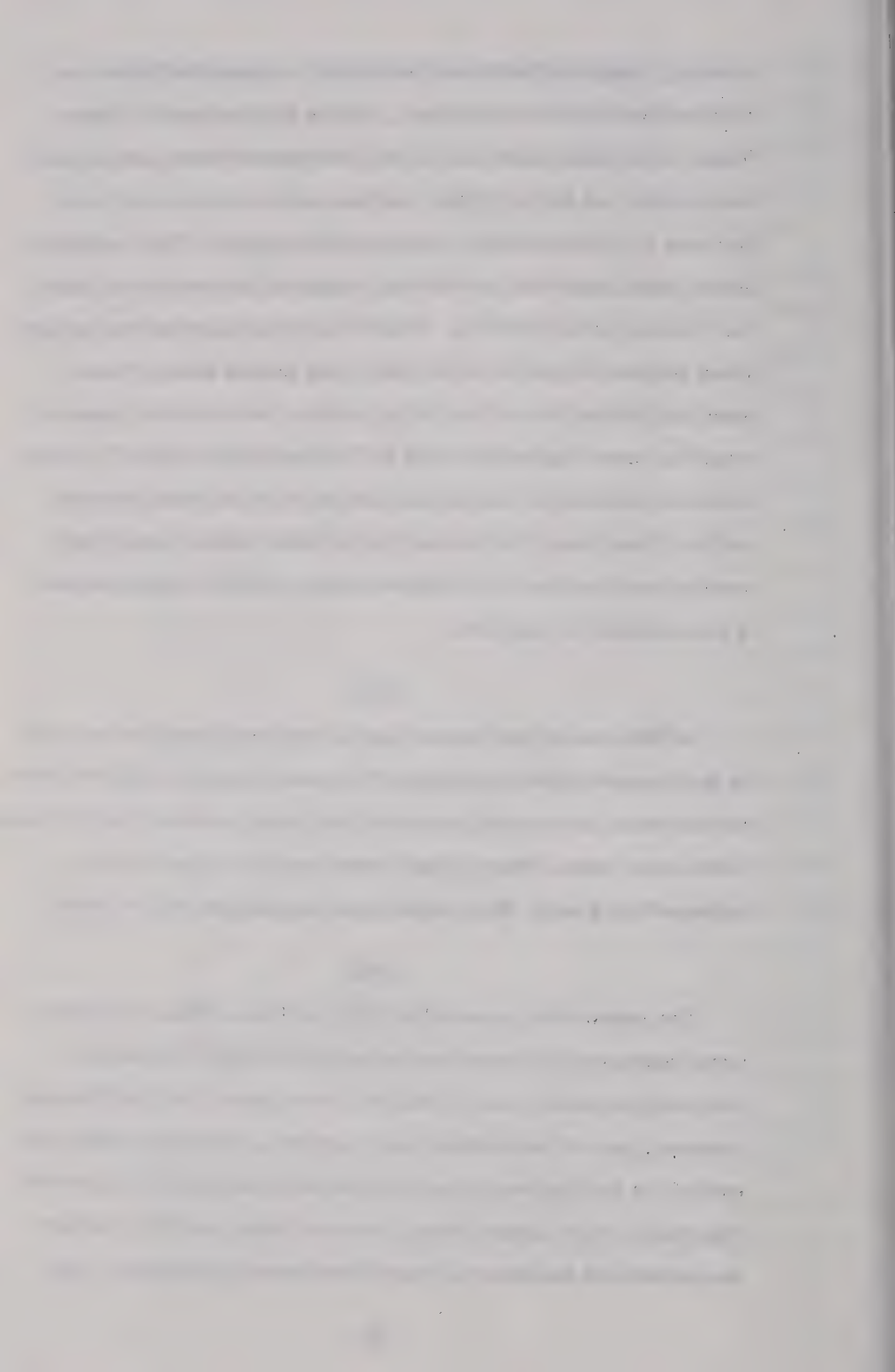
country. Benjamin Smith and his reaping company had failed and they wondered who would be next. As for that decision by Judge Taney in the Dred Scott case saying that negroes were not persons but chattels and had no rights, that was not only untrue but liable to cause a lot more trouble, many of them thought. They remembered the first negro who had furtively appeared in town only to leave for Canada just as furtively. Others had come later and had settled down and had started to do the things that needed doing. Rumor said that Nelson Wolcott had helped quite a few escape by means of what they were beginning to call the "underground railroad". Modern boys are intrigued by the mysterious passage that leads from the old Dr. Town place, the present Earle Nelson house, underground west in the direction of the Bellevue place, and that may have been a slave hideout at one time.

1858

In 1858, one of the famous Lincoln campaign speeches was held in the Tremont Hotel in Chicago. We cannot know for sure who went to hear them, but we can be certain that Judge Lockwood and William Coffin were there. Some of the Towns may have gone, too, and perhaps N.S. Young. Many were there in spirit, of that we know.

1859

The Island Mills, erected in 1859, by Town, Pierce and Payne were flouring mills located on the southern part of the Island. According to the late Henry Buelter, son of one of the first German pioneers, part of the building was a saw mill, while all of the space east of the building was a log yard, including the site of the present City Hall. After passing through several hands, the Mills became the property of the Batavia Paper Manufacturing Company. The



building is, at present, the south plant of the Batavia Body Company.

We must never forget in thinking of Batavia that the industries in town grew out of the industry that was basic to all of them, that of the farming in the rich countryside. Farming is always a gamble, but added to the usual threats of rain, or lack of rain, hail, and pests, was that of fire. Great prairie fires would sweep from farm to farm, especially in the month of October. Farmers would keep a plowed strip around their farms to protect their crops and their buildings. New farm machinery was bringing more efficient methods of producing, but there was still more manual labor than is needed today. Hugh Alexander, who was a twelve or thirteen year old boy on his father's farm near Nelson's Grove in the 1850's, has described early farm life. He stated that corn, then, was cultivated with a two shovel plow. He had to follow behind to pull out the weeds around the corn plants by hand. The grain harvesting machines of that day, cut the grain and left it in windrows to be bound into bundles by hand. The band was made of a wisp of straw, twisted, and the ends tucked in so that the bundle stayed intact.

Young Alexander must have thought the Grove an interesting place to live. It was an ideal roosting place for passenger pigeons, which settled there in great flocks. He used to get a full bag of these birds in a very short time. Nelson's Lake, just west of the Grove, was interesting, too. It was a peculiar body of water in that the ground around it was so loose and spongy that a pole twenty feet long could be shoved into the ground to its full depth. Cattle would sometimes approach too close to the lake, would start to sink in the soft slime, and unless rescued, soon disappeared from view. Fortunately, their pitiful moaning usually caught someone's attention before it was too late. The lake has since been drained, eliminating this



hazard, but also eliminating a great deal of the wild life that once was so plentiful in the neighborhood.

1860

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln, rail splitter from Illinois, was elected President of the United States. Kane County gave him their enthusiastic support in the election, for the political thinking of the people of Batavia had undergone a great revolution. In the first county election, 1836, the Democrats polled 235 votes, while the Whigs polled only 93, a smashing victory for VanBuren, the candidate from New York, which was the home state for so many of the pioneers. In the next election, in 1840, the exciting, cider-drinking Harrison carried a plurality of 36 over VanBuren. Four years later, Democratic Polk received 1046 votes against 748 for Whig Clay, the Liberty Party polling 299. There was, therefore, one more vote cast against the Democratic candidate than he received. In 1848, Batavia township voting alone for the first time, gave 53 votes to the Democratic Cass and the same number to Taylor. Very significant is the fact that 73 votes were cast for the Free Soil Candidate, who was VanBuren, the same man who some of them had voted for on the Democratic ticket eight years before. From that time on, the Democratic ticket declined steadily. In the 1850's with a strong voice, the county Whig convention opposed the extension of slavery in any manner. They endorsed Daniel Webster's remarks on the subject of slavery. In 1856, the support of Republican Fremont was strong. Many anti-slavery advocates were born on the occasion that pro-slavery men tried to "strong-arm" an abolitionist.

It has been claimed that Kane County was the place where the Republican party originated. Since the first Republican meeting





here was held in August of 1854, six months after the meeting in Jackson, Michigan, this could not be true. However, Judge Lockwood, according to his son-in-law, played an important part in the organization of the party.

In that important year the village of Batavia had a population of 1,621, having doubled its population in the last ten years.

#### 1861-1865

It is cheap and easy to express opinions. It is often heroic to act upon them. Batavia, having denounced slavery because of a combination of traditional background, economic interest, and disinterested moral convictions, acted upon their convictions in answer to Abraham Lincoln's call for troops. Batavia had an enviable record for patriotic service during the war, sending 298 men to service. In the North as a whole, 9% of the population served in the war. In Kane county over 13% served, while in this township over 18% of the total population were servicemen. As an example of the spirit of the times, in the Congregational Church, the entire Sunday School class of Deacon Bradley, including the teacher, enlisted.

Of the almost three hundred men, eighty were in Company B, 124th Regiment, which steadily fought its way South, taking an important responsibility in the seige of Vicksburg and then continuing to New Orleans. The 54 men in the 141st regiment of Illinois Volunteer Infantry aided in driving out the guerrillas in Western Kentucky. The 52nd with 36 Batavia men in Company D aided in the famous battle at Shiloh and Corinth. This regiment was in the Atlanta campaign and marched into Savannah. Five were in the 29th Regiment of United States Colored.



As we can see, almost all of the men were in the infantry, 246 being the number. Edgar D. Swain was the only Colonel. H. K. Wolcott and Adin Mann the only Majors. 213 were privates. In some families all the men folks went, four of the Prindles and four of the Manns, and three each from the Wolcott and Burton families.

Of the whole number, Seymour A. Wolcott survived the longest. He was killed in an automobile accident in 1940 at the age of ninety-three. Many returned service men must have moved west, taking advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862, just as some of the local pioneers, veterans of the War of 1812, had taken advantage of the Pre-emption Act. For years, the day before Memorial Day, the remaining "old soldiers" visited the schools, listened to the children singing the old Civil War songs, and then presented each child with an American flag to be carried the next day. Now, to commemorate them and their services, there is a shaft with their names engraved on it in the West Batavia Cemetery, the Newton Monument.

#### 1864

The business men of the North had never liked the Southern opposition to a strong banking system. With the removal of the Southern votes by secession, the National Banking Act of 1863 was passed in an attempt to create a sound and stable money, and banking system. In pursuance of this law, on March 15, 1864, the First National Bank was organized in the present Batavia Body Building with William Coffin as president and Henry C. Paddock as cashier.

#### 1865

There was sorrow in Batavia on the sixteenth day of April, 1865. Veterans, negroes, Judge Lockwood, all the many peoples of the town were saddened by the death of Abraham Lincoln. Written in



one Sunday School book is the comment, "Today we met, but it is in great sorrow. For it was but yesterday that 'our beloved President' breathed his last on earth and now we trust is dwelling in endless bliss. The land is in mourning."

With the conclusion of the War Between the States, a great epoch in American history was finished. There was not a big city or a tiny village that was not radically changed emotionally and economically by the war. The tensions created by the war would not be entirely released for years to come. The economic changes would be so swift that they would be hard to absorb. In Batavia, the events, especially the economic developments, would cast a shadow far into the future.





## CHAPTER VII

### THE AGE OF BIG BUSINESS IN MINIATURE

1867

Businesses that had had a small start before the war were given a great impetus by the war demands so that, now, with the country united once again, they had an unprecedented growth. An ever increasing amount of flour, lumber, plows, windmills, paper, and wagons were being produced by the companies that had already been started. There was a constant need for more labor, which was being drawn not only from the worn-out sections of this country, now, but from abroad. In the 1860-1890 period one-third of the population was foreign born, the total residents having reached 3,018 by 1870.

One of the new factories that was attracting so many of the new citizens was the Challenge Mill Company. This was started in 1867 by Nelson Burr and Hugh M. Armstrong to manufacture feed mills. The first year only two "hands" were employed, but two years later, thirty or forty men were getting weekly pay envelopes at the Challenge pay window. The number employed increased because the company had an innovation. Nelson Burr had invented a successful metal grinding surface. Previous inventors had attempted to devise such a machine, but, meeting failure, had decided that millstones could not be improved upon to convert grain into flour. He, alone, persevered. Ultimately, his products were to be sold all over the world.

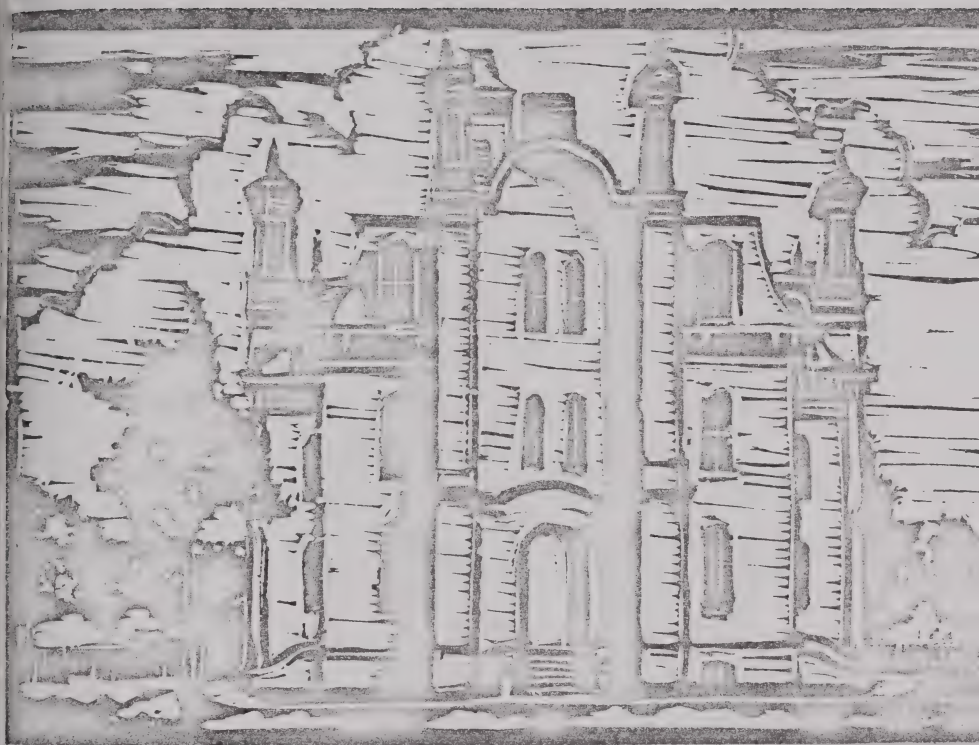
Nelson Burr had had business experience prior to the establishment of the Challenge Company. Coming from England, he had erected a small plant to manufacture pumps, the first ones made in the state. In spite of his mechanical ability, for he made many



inventions, his business at first met diverse reverses, as did that of the Newtons, and he met them in a similar manner. In the spring of 1872, just as the company was prospering, its president absconded with the company's financial assets. Later in the year, March 10th, this was the third of the factories to suffer from fire. The \$45,000 business was insured for \$20,000, of which \$150 was collected, a loss that was due, of course, to the great expense to the insurance companies of the Chicago fire. However, like the Newtons again, the buildings were built once more without delay, adding pumps, windmills, corn-shellors, and other farm machinery to the inventory of production. In 1882, Thomas Snow, an English-born producer, became secretary to the company. This marked the beginning of a change in management. It, at that time, was called the Challenge Windmill and Feedmill Company. Before long it was turning out 2000 windmills a year in addition to other goods, so that where there was not a windmill carrying the name of U.S. Co, there might be one with the name of Challenge. In 1887, Thomas Snow became president, the Snow family holding responsible positions in the firm as long as they did business under the Challenge name.

The Sperry foundry in North Aurora had its origin in this post-war year of 1867, too. A. N. Merrill started a small foundry; in a few years D. R. Sperry bought out part of the concern, and later, the whole business. Sperry moved it from the building that was formerly a part of the Batavia Metal Company area because North Aurora offered more opportunity for expansion, although the company employed Batavia men largely and is considered a Batavia plant. The products have changed from boilers, kettles, cauldrons, and stoves to filter presses.





The Old Grace McWayne Grade School.  
Erected in 1867, razed in 1950.





As for Merrill, he immediately bought an interest in the "Batavia News", which he soon sold to join with Shumway in starting a new foundry on the Island to make iron castings that were needed in the rebuilding of Chicago. The firm changed partnerships several times so that business has been done, successively under the names of Merrill and Shumway, Osgood and Shumway, Shumway and Bishop, and finally, C. W. Shumway and Sons.

The age of Big Business was starting for Batavia.

1868

In September, 1868, a tiny, shy, little girl approached that building that had been called the "imposing pile." She had come to teach the primary grades for the West Batavia Schools. She had come to teach in a building that cost \$27,100 and had "no rival in the country for a beautiful and ornamental exterior". The building was brand new and she was a new teacher attempting her first position. She was not even a Batavia girl so she did not know anyone. She was scared, just plain scared. She found teaching that first week as frightening an experience as she had expected. The first time she went back to her home in Saint Charles she told her father she was never going to go back, that she was a failure as a teacher. Her father asked her very mildly if she were one to quit when a task seemed difficult. She returned. Yes, she returned to teach there for fifty-nine years. She was Miss Grace McWayne.

It is very difficult to measure the influence of a single individual, but Batavians believe that she was the first lady of their city. Each year she would meet children of the factory workers and children of the industrialists, children of the native-born and children of the foreign-born, perhaps fifty of them at a time. She taught one group of youngsters, then their sisters and brothers,



then their children, and then their grandchildren. Hers was a production line whose output could never be evaluated by an inventory, for she shared with her pupils her gentleness, her wit, her human kindness, her eternal youthfulness, her technical knowledge of modern pedagogical practices, her brilliance.

It is difficult to speak of Grace McWayne without sounding as if one were giving an obituary because the things to be said are all good. In the year 1888, she began to teach in what was formerly the Methodist Church. Later she was back in the main building in the role of principal. The "imposing pile" was renamed the McWayne Building. In the fiftieth year of her teaching, the citizens presented her with a purse of \$2,000 to help her in her "old age", for her salary always hovered around the \$1,000 mark. She immediately presented the money to the Board of Education to be used to construct tennis courts on the school's athletic field. She died in 1940 at the age of ninety-two.

#### 1869

With the accumulation of money came the desire for greater culture. In 1869, a Library Association was organized. The forerunner of this was a literary society that had been organized the year before by the students of the Batavia Institute. Life Membership dues were \$5.00 with a yearly tax. With this money books were purchased and kept in an upper room in the Harvey Block on the west side. Officers the first year were: President, S.L. Coffin; Vice-president, J.C. Patterson; Secretary, M.E. Canfield; Treasurer, A.F. Brown; Librarians, W.A. and S.A. Wolcott. These were all prominent men and women. In 1873, F.H. Buck was appointed Librarian, a position he held for fifteen years. At this time the library was moved to the Buck Block. There were 384



volumes in the library, which could all be checked out at no cost, the library being supported by subscription. Five years later there were a thousand volumes, covering a great many fields of interest. Men like VanNortwick, Burnham, and Conde were on the Board. In 1882, it became a township library supported by a one mill tax. By 1888 the number of books had increased to 4,346 and moved to the new VanNortwick Block. Mrs. Margaret Rockwell Twining, daughter of James Rockwell, became librarian at that time and remained librarian until January, 1911. In 1902, Mrs. D.C. Newton, following the wishes of her husband, presented the property at No. 1 Batavia Avenue, the red brick building known as the Levi Newton homestead, to the Library Board of Directors. This made an admirable library for many years, housing 8652 volumes in 1904. Miss Cassie Stephens, who had been assistant librarian since 1902, became the third librarian in 1911, remaining in that position until 1939. In 1921, the library was moved once again. In May of that year the Board of Directors of the Library bought the D.C. Newton property across from the Methodist Church as a home for the library for the total cost of \$8,000. Shortly after the books were transferred, Miss Helen Coffin came to help Miss Stephens and her assistant, Mrs. Bessie VanDervolgen, in cataloguing and systematizing the books. After Miss Stephens retired, Mrs. Miriam Havighurst Johnson became librarian, a position which she still holds. (1940-1962) The initiators of the first library back there in 1869 would have been happy to know that the organization they started would grow until it possessed some 17,000 books, had a trained librarian, was used jointly by the town and the high school across the street, was, until recently,







The John S. Van Nortwick Homestead.



financed jointly by school and township, and had helped to make Batavia a reading community.

#### 1870

In contrast to the growth of the library, which was slow and continuous until the present, the paper industry that grew up in the local "Age of Big Business" flared up quickly but died down just as quickly a few decades later. After John Van Nortwick bought the paper business from the Chicago Fiber and Paper Company, it became known as the Batavia Paper Mfg. Co. and later as the Van Nortwick Paper Company. Under the joint management of him and his sons, John S. and William M., it quickened from being practically moribund to a healthy and prosperous industry, one of the biggest paper mills in the West. At one time it produced almost all of the "print paper" used by one of the Chicago newspapers. With the shift to the use of wood pulp rather than rags and straw, as the raw products for paper and with the financial reverses of the depression of 1893, the local company met its Waterloo just prior to the early 1900's.

Connected with this paper industry was that of the Western Paper Bag Company, which had gone through various hands before it was purchased by the Van Nortwicks in 1885. This concern did an immense business for they turned out 2,000,000 bags of every type daily. The business was burned in 1886, but was quickly rebuilt and doing business down on First Street until it too had run its course.

#### 1871

In 1871, with business booming and buildings being constructed all over town, the Kane County Board of Supervisors let the contract for the construction of a stone building at the Kane County



Home. This institution had been organized almost twenty years before, in 1852. At that time the Board of Supervisors had purchased the farm of Elijah Lee in Geneva Township so that the poor and needy would have food and shelter. The farm consisted of 179 acres with good buildings and a quantity of timber and cost \$16.00 per acre. To begin with, they had seventeen occupants. A two story addition was added in 1858-59 with three "cells" for insane paupers. With the increase of total population there was a relative increase in the indigent. Consequently, it was necessary to construct the old part of the present building at a cost of \$18,000 and to make a further addition in a few years. Part of this was destroyed by fire, in 1887, but was rebuilt in a short time. At this time there were about forty insane inmates among the total of seventy-eight. During the succeeding years, the home has continued without much change except for modernization in the physical set-up and care of patients. At present, 1962, Mr. Paul Willing is Superintendent in charge. The insane patients are taken care of elsewhere.

### 1872-3

Visitors coming to Batavia in 1872 and 1873 were impressed by its hustling spirit, which is understandable. Walking around the island they would have seen windmills, wagons, corn shellers, grinders, and many other machines and tools produced, thousands and thousands of them to be sent all over the world. They might have hired a gig at the livery stable on First Street, or down where the depot is now, to visit the six quarries that were sending out so many hundreds of carloads of stone, so much that the C.&N.W.Ry. was laying tracks as far as the Barker Quarry. Asking the inevitable question, "Well, how's business" they would have been





told about new factories that were starting or were to be started in the near future. These were not large, but they did afford a rather wide-spread of activities. In 1873, a partnership was formed consisting of Frank P. Conde and D.F. Cole to manufacture gloves, mittens, robes, and like articles in a building on the north side of East Wilson Street. About this time, too, the firm of Norris and Doty was started, manufacturing wooden pumps and Hines water tanks. These partners, C.A. Norris and Hiram F. Doty, were not down on the Island, but had located their factory at the northwest corner of North Water and Houston Streets across from the present Alexander Lumber Company office.

Visitors in those years would have been suddenly startled to hear excited voices in a foreign tongue - Swedish. They may have been passing the A.P. Anderson tailor shop located where the Crane Furniture store and have heard Martin Micholson or Andrew Anderson welcoming a newcomer. From what would have been jargon to the visitors, the new Swede would have learned that there were lots of Swedes in town now, that there were plenty of jobs for everyone, that they had to work only ten hours a day, that wages weren't too high, but that they got along, had little gardens, were building homes, even starting businesses like Tailor Anderson, here. They might have said that there were three Swedish churches, and that right now, the Svenska Lutheran church was making a church out of the old school building, yah, life was pretty good here in America.

When the visitors would have returned to their rooms at the Revere House, past the big homes deepseated in green lawns, they would have picked up a Chicago paper, printed on paper made in town. They may have glanced at a copy of the Batavia News,



published by Roof and Lewis. That evening over a dinner prepared from groceries bought at the George Burton grocery store up the block a short distance, they might have talked about these little mid-western towns really having the spirit and feel of America.

1875

When the people in Batavia voted for Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, or the sons of Batavians went off to fight in the war, or they mourned the death of their Lincoln, they had no idea that Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln would spend a year in their town at the Bellevue Place. Bellevue Place was a private rest home and sanitorium for women which had been started in the former Batavia Institute by Dr. R.J. Patterson as proprietor and medical superintendent. Dr. Patterson was a specialist in mental health, far ahead of his day in his theories and practice. Mrs. Lincoln had always been "high strung" and nervous. After Lincoln's assassination, she became quite mentally disturbed, so that her son Robert had her adjudged insane by a Chicago court on May 20, 1875. Her relatives and friends were quite disturbed, by this action and wrote to Mrs. Lincoln after she had been placed in the exclusive Patterson hospital. The letter that follows was in the Bellevue files, in the original writing and presumably unpublished:

West Branch, Iowa

Mrs. Abraham Lincoln  
Belvue Place

We hurd of your arrest and incarceration. Please state to us if you feel as though you have been justly dealt with. We are spiritualists and fear there has been foul play. Speak planely let us hear from you soon.

Elasha Tod,  
Spring Dale, Cedar Co. Iowa

Mrs. Lincoln must have been "justly dealt with", for she found



the peace and relief she needed, and left a year later much improved in mind and spirit.

The room on the second floor assigned to Mrs. Lincoln was, until recently, furnished with the original bed and dresser that she had used while there.

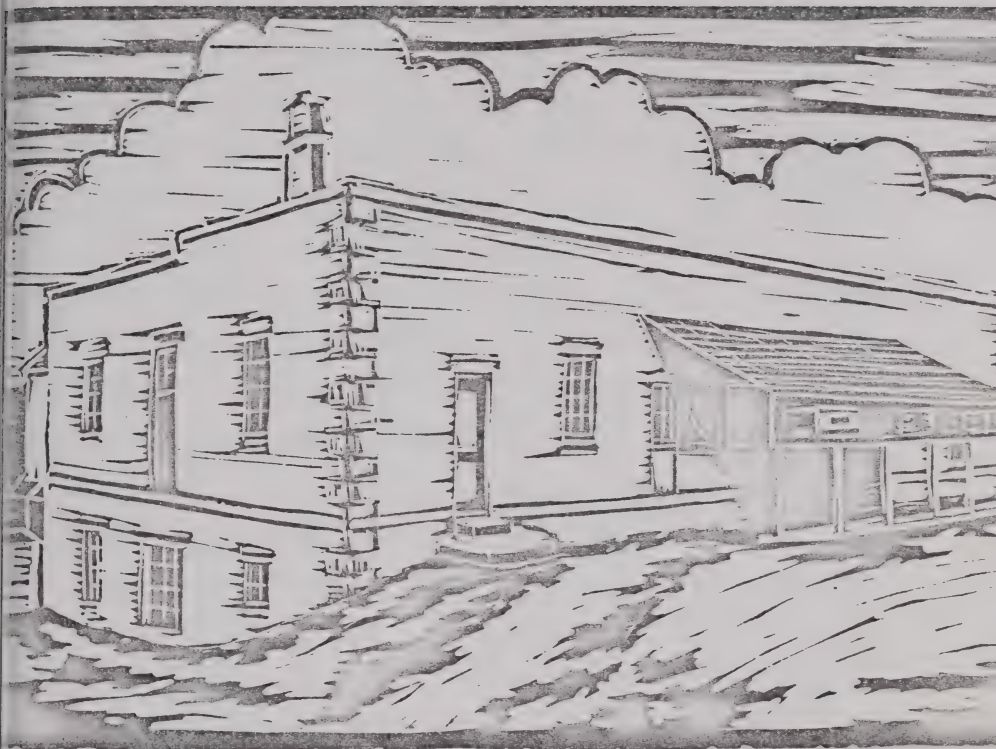
As for Bellevue, Dr. R.J. Patterson, with the assistance of his son, John, remained in the capacity of superintendent for twenty years, until 1887. During seven years of this time he was professor of medical jurisprudence in the Chicago Medical College. A wide experience made him well fitted for this honor, for he had been successively medical staff member of the Ohio Lunatic Asylum, Medical Superintendent of the Indiana State Hospital for the Insane, and then, just prior to his coming to Batavia, Medical Superintendent of the Iowa State Hospital for the Insane. After 1887, the hospital was managed by a private corporation consisting of S.A. Wolcott, his sons Ray and Richard, and the Daniels with Dr. F.H. Daniels as the resident doctor. During part of his stay, his sister-in-law, Miss Lena Stimpson, was superintendent of nurses, retiring in 1938. She had come here from Maine in 1893 to see the Chicago Fair and had just stayed. After the death of Dr. Daniels, while there was no resident doctor, Bellevue became a rest home under the management of the T.S. Daniels. In 1945, it was sold to Dr. Edward Ross and is once again a fine mental hospital, for refined but mentally unstable females, as it was back in the days that Mrs. Lincoln stayed there.

1877

It would be wrong to consider Batavia a suburb of Chicago. It has not grown up as an adjunct to the city but as a separate personality. Nevertheless, the proximity of Chicago has been an im-







Batavia Creamery.



portant influence in determining the activities of Batavians. Shopping, shows, art, universities, jobs, all send many into the "city" every day. The influence on the local industry, of course, may have more significance to serious historians. One of the first local industries was the establishment of a "flouring" mill, because of the need to turn the grist to meal so that the family might eat. When Chicago grew so that it could not raise enough wheat to satisfy its needs, and when it became a grain center, many farmers turned to grain raising for a cash crop. It was during that period that hundreds and hundreds of wagons of flour found their way to Chicago. However, about the time that Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over the lantern, the growing demand for dairy products caused the farmers in this area to shift somewhat from grain farming to dairying. Even during the Civil War, there was a creamery established and in 1877 paralleling the experience and actions of the other towns along the Fox River, a cheese factory was established in Batavia. Some hogs and cattle were sold in Chicago, too.

## 1882

The formation of secret societies is frequently considered a step forward in civilization. In 1882, local records show that Masonic Lodge No. 404 was permitting free use of their hall to the Odd Fellows so that they might organize a chapter of that society. The latter organization was too young, then, to have a history in 1882, but the Masons first appeared in Batavia in 1849 with the organization of Lodge No. 73. The membership at that time included Thompson Mead, Meredith Mallory, J.W. Churchill, J.C. Walden, John Van Nortwick, and T.L. Cleveland. Before it dissolved in 1859 there were many more familiar names on the records: C.B. Conde, C. Ballard, C.W. Shumway, L.P. Barker,



Charles A. Bucher, E. H. Gammon, William Coffin, Alexander Grimes, J. C. Derby, and C. Winslow.

The present Lodge was organized in 1864. Many of the same names reappear on their records, but among the new ones on the charter list, were Ed. Strain, D.H. Starkey, Chas. C. Stephens, Thomas Meredith, L.M. Burroughs, S.H. Mallory, and C.E. Smith.

1888

There are cycles in construction as there are in most things. In this Age of Big Business, Batavia-style, the tremendous growth in industries was, of course, attended by a parallel boom in construction, for both the businesses and the workers had to be housed. Many of the homes were overcrowded for there was a severe housing shortage. Undoubtedly, more money could be made in commercial construction. In the 1870's the Newton and the Challenge companies had to be reconstructed after the fire, The Thomle block was put up in 1878 by Ole Thomle. He was the first Norwegian to come to the town, arriving in 1854 practically penniless. As in the typical Alger story, through hard work and skill he became prosperous, for he owned a thriving furniture business as well as the building. The Thomle homestead is north of his "block" on River Street a short distance. The VanNortwicks put up a block on the island in 1888, in which the library, the post office, their own bank and many other businesses were located. In other forms of construction, there was the West Side bridge built in 1876 to replace the embankment. In 1889, the Swedish Methodists had erected their pretty little church at the corner of N. Washington and McKee Streets. It may speak well for the stability of the town that the construction of churches kept up with the other construction. In 1880, the Calvary Episcopal had been completed, but, perhaps the construction of the Methodist Church caused most comment.





First, the Methodists had met in the old home of William VanNortwick, back in the pioneer days; then, they had grown enough to have a pastor and to build a little stone church. Now, March 18, the new First Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated. It is in the French Romanesque style of architecture and is similar in style to a church that Captain Newton saw on a trip to southern France. This church, built of granite boulders deposited in the fields around Batavia by the glacier, has a slate roof and is trimmed with Bedford sandstone. For the benefit of those interested in numbers, it may be said that it cost \$30,000 and covers an area 60 by 113 feet. Isaac Stephens was the stone work contractor.

The unique thing about this church was that Captain Newton and Rev. E. H. Gammon gave the church building, locating it right across the street from the Newton home so he could admire it at will. We know the Newton story. As for E.H. Gammon, he was one of the early Methodist preachers in Batavia. However, he had to relinquish work shortly even though he had been appointed to the position of District Superintendent because his voice partially failed him. Subsequently, he became a member of the firm of Newton and Company for a short time. He was in various partnerships and various businesses until in 1869 he acquired an interest in the Plano Harvester Company and became prosperous. He put the fortune to good use, for he founded the Gammon Theological Seminary at Atlanta, Georgia, a school for the training of negroes for the ministry and he joined with D.C. Newton in donating the money for the Batavia church.

Returning to the subject of church building, the Bethany Lutheran people dedicated their red brick church in March a few days after the Methodists dedicated their building. The cornerstone of the present Baptist Church was laid in September.



On June 9, 1891, Batavia took its last step in political government, for on that day it was incorporated as a city, having advanced a long way since it became a village in 1856. At that time it had a population of 1800, now it has 3,543. Then, town and country consumed each others' goods and services almost entirely. In 1890, goods reached a world market. A new generation had come into authority, although some of the new men were sons of the old. In early village days there were the names of John VanNortwick, Langdon Miller, Peleg Young, C.B. Conde, A.W. Bull, N. S. Young, E.H. Gammon, Wm. Coffin. In early city days there were such names as J.H. Miller, H.B. Bartholomew, A.H. Arnold, H.G. Shumway, Fred H. Doty, Wm M. and J.S. VanNortwick, and J.H. Young.

In 1891, the First National Bank of Batavia was formed, the first early bank to survive until modern times. Batavia had had a number of banks prior to this time, as may be attested by reading the signs and names printed on the doors in the business blocks. During the period of wild-cat banking when there were no federal regulations, many persons had sorry experiences. One of these was Adin Mann, father of Hattie, Eugene, and William, who was county treasurer in 1860 and 1861. The currency that he accepted at par, probably a combination of greenbacks and State notes, promptly depreciated to half value during the early years of the war when the turn of battle was not favorable to the North so that he had to sell everything to meet the demands of the county. William Coffin, who started a bank called the Batavia Bank, a private banking house, in 1856 must have fared better because his bank weathered the hard times of 1857 to be merged with the First National Bank in 1864.



Mr. Coffin had a reputation for reliability. He had come to Batavia in 1853 with his father-in-law, Judge Lockwood. He had studied law and theology and had taught mathematics, natural philosophy, and astronomy at Illinois College, but he had to resign his professorship due to ill health, and he entered business. He entered almost as many business ventures as the Towns and the VanNortwicks, although on not as big a scale as the latter. As has been noted, then, it was logical for him to be the bank president of the First National with his friend H.C. Paddock as cashier. The name of the bank could still be seen until recently on the office door of the Sloggett Insurance Agency. When the charter to this bank ran out in 1879, it was not renewed, but, instead, Coffin and Young started a private bank in the Newton Block. This partnership lasted only a year, but both men had other banking experiences. Coffin was senior partner in Coffin and Paddock in Aurora and Coffin and Tollman in St. Charles, both banking firms.

In 1880, Gammon and Newton bought out Coffin and Young, but Nathan S. Young, stayed on as first cashier. The experience in banking and general repute of Young were both excellent. The son of another Nathan Young, a general, he had migrated to Batavia in 1843, after which he had been variously occupied, as owner of a warehouse, as operator of a grain store, as highway commissioner, as town assessor, and in many other ways. He had been a shareholder and director in the First National Bank, and was made vice-president of the second First National Bank that was formed in 1891. Of his two children, Justin H. Young started out under him as assistant cashier and his daughter, Fannie, was an employee of the bank from 1900 to 1938. The bank itself has always stood for sound and conservative banking.





There were three other important financial institutions in Batavia in 1891. One was the E.S. Smith & Sons, which dealt in insurance, loans and real estate. Mr. E.S. Smith had been an agent of several of the big insurance companies, including the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company since 1862, having built up quite a prosperous business. His son, Edward M. Smith later assisted him. Another son the late Frank P. Smith, who lived on Main Street in a green and white house on a street lined by white and green houses. He dipped back into his memories to recall many persons and concerns that would otherwise be lost.

There was also the insurance company of Palmer and Burnett. This company has been long discontinued--George Burnett became one of the Town's outstanding undertakers.

## 1892

The newspapers of the day were carrying stories of women doing such daring things as wearing divided skirts, a "poor anomalous little garment", but the women of Batavia were apparently finding the larger expression that the more modern day was eliciting by forming the Kane Co. Women's Exhibition Club. This organization came into being June 4, 1892, in the parlors of Mrs. William M. VanNortwick's home. At that time, Mrs. Jane G. Gammon was elected president, although on her death in December, Mrs. VanNortwick was chosen to replace her. The name of the club was later changed to Woman's Columbian Club of Batavia and, finally in 1895, to its present title, Woman's Club of Batavia. Its avowed object is to work unitedly in all the interests, educational, domestic and philanthropic of the community, and to gain mutual support and improvement.



A new newspaper was established in 1892, sharing the local "scoops" with the Batavia News. This paper had been established in 1869 and survived until the death of Clark A. Lewis long after the Herald was established. The News had been owned for a time by Roof and Lewis, then by Roof and Merrill, and, finally, by Lewis. Prior to that time, there had been a local sheet called the Argus, but that was in pre-Civil War days. In the 1870's the Fox River News had lasted only three months, but the Batavia Herald that was started in 1892 has served the community until the present. Under F.E. Marley, the Herald was printed in offices in the VanNortwick block. He had a novel scheme of printing his paper in two sections, each one equal to the other, in order to satisfy more front page advertisers. Until recently, the paper was printed in new offices near Batavia Avenue under the editorship of Arnold Benson. The policy of the paper is to be diligent in the interest of the town not only by recording the events of the present, but by recalling the events of the past. In 1952 the Herald moved into its new brick building on Main Street. Then in 1960 Arnold P. Benson sold the paper to Wilbur X. Derus.

1893

One of the accompaniments to the increased industrialization of any area, unfortunately, is an increased reaction to national depressions. Pioneer Batavia would not have known of the difficulties of 1837 except as hard times elsewhere made migration to the new west most desirable. The panic of 1857 was more disturbing. Some firms were forced out of business, as was that of Benjamin Smith; Ferslew said that he had a hard time getting advertisements for his directory of that year. Yet, the suffering was relatively slight. In 1893, times were different. Most of the major concerns were



able to keep all or almost all of the men employed, although smaller enterprisers and a certain proportion of labor had difficult times. The banks did, too, apparently.

1894

With the coming of the Appleton Manufacturing Company, in 1894, the local Age of Big Business had reached its peak. There were numerous small businesses being formed constantly, of course. One of the most interesting of these was that of John Mole's Tire Shrinker Works established in 1887. Mr. Mole's shop was located near the river above the Challenge Mill Company, where he manufactured his inventions; a tire shrinker, adjustable clamps, and a bird trap. The latter was a revolving trap for throwing glass balls for trap shooting.

However, the biggest news in a long time was the appearance of the Appleton Manufacturing Company. As its name implies, this company was formed in Appleton, Wisconsin. Established February 5, 1872, by B.T. Rogers, J.W. Morris, and G.D. Rowell, it manufactured such farm implements as were used locally and determined in 1894 to move to the Fox River because of the greater advantages. Their first location was between Geneva and Batavia in a little settlement that was given the name of VanNortwick, which is not surprising. Here a rather ambitious factory was constructed that soon was employing many men and making tread powers, sweep horse-powers, wood and galvanized steel windmills, corn shellers, feed cutters, seeders, wood saws, and other needful articles. William M. VanNortwick was President; John S. VanNortwick, Vice-president, secretary, treasurer; Peter Hobler, general manager, E.G. Hobler, general agent.

In 1900 a disastrous fire destroyed the plant, which was then





moved into the city in 1901. Later presidents have included E.G. Hobler; John VanNortwick, son of Wm.M.; and the present president, Bruce Drever. J.H. Sanders was made secretary in 1914. The present vice-president is John VanNortwick, great great grandson of pioneer William VanNortwick.

The company, in its heyday, had branches in Minneapolis, Kansas City, and Council Bluff. It used to do business amounting to from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000 yearly, but now it has gone out of business entirely and other firms occupy the buildings.

\* \* \* \* \*

But all was not work in this rather glorious period. With the coming of the machine came increased need for vacations and for fun that might be a release from the tension or monotony of work. Once again, Batavia did not afford its citizens the gay extravagant times that a few "robber barons" in the East enjoyed, but they could have a rip-roaring good time at Laurelwood Park. A man named Laurel conceived the idea of the park and promoters in town carried it out. The park was located along the river, the wooded section northeast of town, the present site of Sunnyside Park. Here were all the attractions of the "great White Way"! What would you have? Here is a race track where you may lay money on horses owned by Dr. Bothwell, Newton or Newman. Here is a sixty-foot diving tower from which you can plunge into the cooling water of the Fox. Even more daring is the balloon ascension that will promise you an exciting ride whether you be man, woman, or monkey. If all this seems too dangerous, here is "Admiral" Fred Larson with his stern-wheeler steamboat, the "City of Batavia" leaving immediately for the west side bridge, fare only five cents.

For some years the park was very popular. County fairs were



held here. Thousands of people came out from Chicago on special excursions. At one time there were supposed to have been 24,000, which is quite a picnic. Then, after the Spanish American War, it went into a decline and died. Now, its successor, Sunnyside Park is a home addition.

It is easy to discover information about elections and freight loadings and date of organization. It is considerably more difficult to discover what any people enjoy doing because that is such a personal matter. Men enjoyed going to the annual sales of the Batavia Horse Market Association. Batavia had quite a reputation for its horses at one time. They evidently enjoyed midnight foot races or they would not have held them. The men spent a lot of time practicing for their band concerts, for the Rock City Cornet Band had just been formed with John Geiss as their musical leader; Frank Pratt, president; Ed Bucher, Secretary. For the men, too, there were always the veterans' get-togethers, such as the reunion in Elgin of the 52nd Illinois Veteran Volunteers to which the invitations were "neat and tasty", or the big convention in Portland, Maine which some Batavians attended.

Women for their enjoyment did what they have done for many years. They had teas and luncheons and recitals: "The concert given by Miss Ethel Gamble at Music Hall was well attended ...Miss Gamble drew exquisite music from her violin, while Miss Nettie Durno charmed her hearers touching the keys of the piano...the mandolin of Mr. Roy Conde gave forth sweet music."

As for the youngsters, they can always have a good time. Boys played baseball. The rules in those days, so Frank Smith says, "provided for seven balls and four strikes, and you could call for a ball, either low, waist high, or shoulder high, just where you wanted



it." There was great rivalry between the east side team, the Rock Cities, and the west side team, the Batavians. Lots of the boys who played on these teams -- or the Liberties or the Jumbos, later held important business positions: H.N. Jones, Frank Buck, A.D. Mallory, John VanNortwick, James Mair, Frank Smith, and others.

1896

On July 6, 1896, the Batavia Lodge No. 1 Sons of the North, was organized by N.P. Gustafson, who was elected chairman at the first meeting. Robert Seidlitz became vice-chairman; Charles E. Johnson, Recording secretary; Charles Johnson, Financial secretary; Andrew Benson, Treasurer; John E. Carlson, Marshall; and John Johnson, Guard. Its chief purpose was to help the new Swedish immigrants make an easier adjustment to their new home. By this time the Swedish population was growing rapidly--it was to make up about half the town before the influx of Swedes tapered off. Martin Micholson says that the earliest Swedish settlers suffered a great deal of privation, work was scarce and wages were very low, and, of course, they were mistrusted since they were the first large immigrant group. Some of the first ones were Lars Benson, father of the late James Bengston, Elias Anderson, who lived at 147 W. Wilson St., Andrew Anderson, grandfather of Mrs. J. Alfred Borgeson, and Mrs. Ruth, and A.P. Anderson, the tailor, who preceded them all. At the time of the Chicago fire among those who came were the Micholsons, James Sevetsen, Andrew Larson, Peter Johnson (Horse Pete) Andrew Redborg, some of the Hendricksons, Charles Gronlund, and Oscar and J. A. Anderson.

The first business venture, other than that of Tailor Anderson, was a fiasco. It was rumored that ten men put in a dollar each and a great deal of bossing and controversy. Apparently there was





insufficient financial interest and over sufficient managerial interest, because the whole project failed except that Oscar and J.A. Anderson rescued what was left to establish the business that they operated for years under the name of Anderson Brothers, doing a lively trade on the west side as the "Swede Store". It was on the steps of the "Swede Store" that Frank Smith saw the steeple of the Congregational Church topple over into the Rockwell residence into the front room that the blind Miss Annie had just vacated. The two brothers succeeded well enough for them to be able to erect the brick building on the corner of Batavia Avenue and Wilson. For years one could go into the northern half run by John A. for meat, potatoes, and "lutefisk" and the other half run by Oscar Anderson for five yards of gingham and a spool of thread. Today Oscar's granddaughter will still sell you five yards of gingham and a spool of thread there.

Since the post Civil War period, the Swedes have risen economically and in every other way, so that they now hold every type of professional position and political office, beginning back in the days when John Benson and John Micholson were the first alderman to the present time when the mayors since 1949 have been descendants of Swedes. The Swedish people were always a cautious and a thrifty people so that they quickly took on the coloring of the canny and ambitious New Englanders and York Staters among whom they settled, even to their political proclivities. They always have said, in Batavia, that the process of Americanization was that of turning a good Swede into a good Republican. Since the days of Polk, after their first allegiance to the Democratic party, Batavians had voted consistently for Whig and then even more overwhelmingly, for the Republicans. Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Harrison, and McKinley received their support as did the defeated candidates, Blaine and



Harrison when the rest of the country went Democratic for Cleveland. In the same manner, in 1936, almost all the country might vote for Roosevelt, but not Kane County, which sided alongside Maine and Vermont for Landon.

The Post-Civil War period in American history was like a child's adolescence. It was dynamic, growing--a coupling of a grasping after material things with a searching after things cultural and spiritual. So it was with Batavia. Business was booming. As the period ends, 250 men are hustling around at the Challenge, 300 at the U.S. Company, 300 at the Appleton, 200 at the Paper Bag Company, 50 here, 40 there, and individual enterprisers are striking out by themselves. During the age of Big Business, railroad services had been increased to take care of the increased demand. In 1872 a branch of the C.& N.W.Ry. had been built on the west side. In 1893, a branch of the Northwestern had been constructed on the east side to service the shops there. This ended the Century of Progress as far as railroads in Batavia were concerned--subsequently, they started their retrogression.

The VanNortwicks, millionaires, were riding the crest. There was money in the banks, the First National with a capitalization of \$50,000 and the VanNortwicks with ten times that amount. In 1896 the VanNortwick Bank was absorbed by the First National Bank. The Batavia National Bank was founded in 1909. This is not frontier. This is no village. This is a young city. It throbs!



## CHAPTER VIII

### The Present

1897

The "present" may be interpreted variously. It may mean the time included in our own memory span. It may mean a period of years that blend with this year. Or it may just mean the twentieth century, including a few years that curve around the corner into the last century. Certainly, the new sophistication and the increase of modern convenience is part of the present. To wit, when the children started off to school in the fall of 1897, there were forty telephones in use in town. Perhaps, some of the children bragged about having seen one, or even using one. Undoubtedly, the same persons who had telephones also had these beautiful, smooth cement sidewalks in front of their houses. Captain Newton had had the first one in town put in fourteen years before this. The little girls liked them very much because they were so much fun to roller skate on, but the boys preferred the old cinder ones because of their marble games. It is unlikely that any consideration was given to their opinion when a family was considering a new street, however. Some of the children may have bought their new school clothes in Aurora. The electric trolley cars between Aurora and Batavia had been completed the year before. Many of the women liked to go to Aurora to shop. They said there was more "selection" in the bigger city, besides a day's excursion was so much fun, and the fare was only fifteen cents. They did not realize that with the coming of the "Roaring" Elgin, as the line was called, there would be a steady decline in the local retail business. The youngsters had fun on the Aurora-Elgin (the line was completed the length of the valley in 1901) when the trolley fell, or there was a hot box, or they went on a picnic to Pottowatomie Park in the open cars.





If the school youngsters were "East Siders", their reluctant feet would be taking them to a building that was only three years old. Some of the fourth graders can remember how "scared" they were when they were in the first grade, and the old school chimney caught fire, and the building burned, and the teachers got them all out in a hurry, and their mothers cried until they knew they were all safe and no one was hurt.

At the same time men expressed their proud approval of the new city water system installed in 1894, -good artesian water, best in the state--everything up to date, including the standpipe--can't be having these bad fires all the time with no protection. In 1895, the new city hall was erected of Batavia stone. It was put up well so that it would last a good many years. In addition to the "trolley", there were twenty trains daily between Geneva, Batavia, and Aurora on the C.&N.W.Ry., west side line!

1898

The Civil War had cut into the heart of the city. The Spanish-American War seemed more like grand opera make-believe, by comparison. Eleven Batavians enlisted, a contrast to 298 of the previous war. When Admiral Dewey was victorious in Manila harbor, crowds of citizens celebrated while the Batavia Concert Band played and the Drum Corps beat away on their drums. And a pretty girl out at Laurelwood park broke a bottle of some soft drink over the prow of a river boat and named it "Dewey."

In 1898, too, men began to talk about going up to Alaska to search for gold or going to Minnesota to take up new land. Some did more than talk; they went.

1899

In 1899, a free mail delivery service was established in



Batavia. The postal system had come a long way since Judge Isaac Wilson was the first postmaster. There had been numerous postmasters: J.C. Waldron, C.H. Brown, A.M. Moore, M.P. Houck, E.S. Smith, Willis L. Grimes, James T. McMaster and A. Challman. In 1893, the post office had been moved to the new Van Nortwick block but had previously occupied various buildings on both the west and east side. Eventually, in 1928, September 10, it was housed in its present federal-constructed building. As for the services, free mail delivery was the first real innovation. In preparation for the day, the houses had all been numbered, and a record made of each occupant in each house. Twenty-two took the civil-service examination, but the three who rated highest were: Charles A. Pierce, who started a 130,000 mile walk that he was to finish in 1938; Charles Grimes, who was son to pioneer Alexander Grimes and brother to ex-postmaster Willis Grimes; and C.J. Evans. Rural free delivery was to come in 1905, a postal savings department in 1911, and a parcel post department in 1913.

## 1900

At the turn of the century Glenwood Park, south of Batavia and along the east bank of the Fox River, a beautiful, wooded, and picturesque spot, was developed by the Aurora, Elgin and Chicago Railroad. This "third rail line", which had just been completed, brought train loads of Chicagoans out to enjoy the natural beauty of the park.

It also was to take the shopping housewife into the "loop" to shop--there was a much bigger "selection."

Batavia employers were paternalistic. Come Christmas or Thanksgiving, the men in the shop were apt to receive a turkey or something special as a bonus from the boss. More than that, the



merchants and factory owners sponsored an excursion for the townspeople every year, going to a different place each year. It was a big town affair with almost all of the business houses, factories, and stores closed for a one day holiday. In 1900, they all went to Peoria on the C.B. & Q; the round trip fare was only \$1.50!

## 1902

In 1881, Batavia had reason to be a little jealous of Aurora because that town had preceded them in the installation of electric street lights. Time brought them recompense, for in 1902, Batavia was the first city in the whole world to receive artificial gas under high pressure. The test in bringing gas from Aurora to Batavia was successful so that it was proved for all time that each municipality did not need to have its own plant, but that gas might be produced, at one central point and then distributed under pressure to the surrounding cities.

## 1903

In 1903 Batavia experienced its first strike. It was not a happy experience at all. Apparently, the management of the "U.S." wanted their men to work one-half hour overtime at regular wages. The men, instigated by some union leaders, demanded time and a half for overtime, with a nine hour day as standard. Sympathy strikes were called in the other factories so that about 800 men were out of work. The employers refused to deal with the union leaders, saying that they were outsiders. Finally, they threatened to close the factories just before Christmas if the men did not return. The men did not come back and the shops were closed. Gradually, they returned. After that they worked an extra half





hour weekdays and got off at noon Saturdays. There were no more turkeys.

The first, and last, man to be "murdered" in Batavia was killed in 1903. A policeman attempted to arrest a man for being drunk and disorderly. The man resisted, fought the policeman, and the policeman shot and killed him. The town was pretty much upset. That was the total crime wave to date.

#### 1911

When something is constructed of stone, it is built to stay, unless it becomes outmoded. In 1911, the old stone bridge that had served so many generations was torn down and replaced with the new monolithic concrete bridge. The bridge is sixty feet wide, 225 feet long with three arches and cost \$30,500.

#### 1912

Batavians are quite athletic minded, at least when it comes to basket-ball. Football is all right. Baseball is popular in season and out, whether it be sandlot or otherwise. But when it comes to basketball, the town really waxes enthusiastic. Batavians never forget that in 1912, they had a state winning champion basketball team. The much honored school boy winners of that proud class were Dwight Emigh, Clarence Hanson, "Dutch" Toronto, Horace Bone, "Chuck" Barr, Ray "Irish" McDermott, and Parks Bailey. In celebration, whistles blew, crowds broke into the churches to ring the bells, everyone regardless of age or previous condition of dignity, laughed, shouted, and cheered. Since that time to be a successful basket ball player has been the chief desire of young Batavians. "Kids" put barrel hoops up on the barn or garage to practice "shots" by the hour. As a result, the town has had good success in this sport. The hero on the year's team is apt to have

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

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RESISTANCE OF THE BODY TO INFECTION  
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little boys tagging along at his feet wherever he goes. They idolized John Mauer. He was at West Point teaching basket ball to the cadets.

Of course, the event of the year that was most significant did not really happen in the city, yet in the township, one and a half miles south of town. In 1912, Mooseheart was created, the embryo of the fine child city it has become today. This home for children is located on a 1200 acre estate that is one of the local beauty spots. Here live over 1000 children as happily as children can live who are not in a normal home. The training and care is of the very best whether it be that of health, vocational guidance, academic knowledge, mental health, or recreation.

### 1913

In economic studies, the year 1913 is frequently chosen as the index year to serve as a base and a measure of comparison. If we should glance at Batavia for that year, we would see that the heady steam of 1900 is gone. The paper mills and the bag factory are no more. The early captains of industry are either getting old or have died. The previous year the Newton Wagon Company had been bought by the Emerson Brantingham Co. They were to make wagons for a few years more but the days of the wagon were almost over. In 1916, they opened a department for the manufacture of auto bodies and fenders. They were not like the wagon manufacturer who went to his banker and asked for a loan of \$50,000 until "this motor truck craze blows over." Every year more and more cars were appearing on the road, automobiles and "tin lizzies" both. They would welcome the new roads that were to come into effect with the passage of the necessary appropriations in 1917. On the whole, things were quieter. John Van Burton was



elected mayor that year, the last of the descendants of the old pioneers to receive that honor. He was the son of Amos Burton, who was brought here as a baby by his father in 1856.

#### 1914

In the cause of culture, learning, and sophistication, the Chautauqua came to Batavia as it did to many towns just like Batavia. The advance agents first contacted those city leaders who were more interested in humanitarian interests than they were in financial advantage to promote their project. When the project was properly promoted, that is, when the sponsors had signed their agreement to underwrite any loss, tickets were sold, and the first day's performers arrived. Crowds filled the big brown tents either in the west or east side school yards. Here was that which would please many tastes. For the erudite, we give you Ralph Parlette, Bob LaFollette, or Strickland Gillilan. For the musically inclined, there are the bell ringers, the Plantation Singers, a soprano, or a man's quartette. For those who like novelty treats, here is a potter who makes bowls as you watch, all the time philosophizing that it is not the foot that does the treading that becomes fatigued -- or would you prefer this man who can do such clever sleight of hands tricks. For the youngsters (season tickets, 50¢ please) there is a Junior Play Organizer who tells stories, directs games, and presents all the children in a pageant about Indians. That phase of development, along with its partner, the lyceum course, passed here as it did in the nation in 1924. But it was fun while it lasted.

#### 1915

In 1915, as the Batavia Woman's Club dedicated the new High School Auditorium, it could speak with pride of this last step in



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the advancement of knowledge. This modern building was one of the most expensive ever erected in Batavia, for it cost \$68,000, having numerous class rooms, a large assembly room, and a combined auditorium. The quarries had served their day; this building was made of red brick. It was located on the northern half of the Van Nortwick residential block, with the old limestone Greek Revival John Van Nortwick home between it and the huge villa on the south end of the block where the widow of the late William M. Van Nortwick lived behind her high fence. The limestone building was first used as a grade school and then, for many years, as a home economics building.

The assemblage gathered in the high school auditorium for the dedication could well be proud of educational progress in the past few decades. As for constructions, there were in 1906 a new red brick elementary school in the south end of town called the Blaine Street school and additions to the two other grade buildings -- in 1898 to the school now known as the McWayne and in 1926 to the east side school now known as the Louise White school. Moreover, in 1910, the east and west side school districts were finally consolidated to form district 101. The two separate school boards were fused into one, the class of 1911 being the first united class to be graduated. With the years, barriers and tensions between the east side and west side disappeared because of the friendships and understandings formed in school.

But, more important than all this, was the fact that Batavia has been fortunate in having had great numbers of outstanding educators. Miss Grace McWayne has been mentioned. Her counterpart of the east side was Miss Louise White, after whom the east side elementary school was named. Miss Anna Barrett, primary teacher

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the success of any business and for the protection of the interests of all parties involved. The author notes that many businesses fail because they do not keep adequate records, leading to confusion, disputes, and financial loss.

2. The second part of the paper describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It discusses the importance of using reliable sources of information and the need to carefully evaluate the quality of the data collected. The author also discusses the importance of using statistical methods to analyze the data and to draw valid conclusions from it.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the success of any business and for the protection of the interests of all parties involved. The author notes that many businesses fail because they do not keep adequate records, leading to confusion, disputes, and financial loss.

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at the Blaine Street was not here so long, but she was beloved by her many six-year-olds. To Mr. H.A. Bone goes a great deal of the credit for unifying the school system and for the extensive construction program. In 1916 Mr. Bone left for Sioux City, at which time Dr. H.C. Storm came to be superintendent of schools. He brought a freshness of spirit, a love of children, a keen insight into the problems of education that did much to make the schools of Batavia win the respect of those acquainted with school matters. It was under his administration that the Board of Education established a plan for religious instruction. Each Thursday the children are dismissed to go to their respective churches for religious education. To many, this is known as the "Batavia Plan."

#### 1916

Batavia was founded during the time of the great national temperance reform movement. Partly because of that and partly because of the stability of the people who settled here, there were relatively few cases of bad drunkenness even in early Batavia. After the days of "local option" Batavia was alternately "wet" and "dry". The town was dry, the saloons came in, they were voted out in 1908, only to be voted out again in 1916. Meanwhile, the "blind pigs" continued to operate in wet or dry weather, and those who felt the thirst too strong traveled to nearby towns. In 1920 prohibition came, ending in 1933.

#### 1917

April 6, 1917, war was declared on Germany. Some men volunteered. Some waited to be drafted, but before the war was over, more than three hundred young Batavians were in their country's military service. The whole town was in service as far as co-operating with the war effort is concerned. Children in schools

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bought stamps and bonds, pretending that they were sinking submarines or firing guns. Housewives cooperated everywhere with meatless and wheatless days. The farmers in the township profited by the sharp rise in grain. At one time that would have meant a brisk business in Batavia farm implement sales, but with the coming of the tractor and other motor driven machinery, Batavia manufacturers could not compete. There was at least one advantage to such a situation. Without a war boom, there was little post-war depression in 1921.

### 1918

In the fall of 1918, school children had two unscheduled holidays. On October 29, Lt. Bolton Mallory of the United States Aviation Corps flew the first plane to Batavia, landing west of town. The schools closed to welcome him -- or because the children could not be kept in school when the rumor got around that a plane had landed. Bolton Mallory is a nephew of Smith L. Mallory, a railroad builder and contractor who settled in Batavia in 1852. He married the movie actress, Nancy Carroll.

Two weeks later, with the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918, the whole town took a holiday. Fellows around town had an effigy all ready for the occasion. For some time, too, they had been gathering old lumber and branches. Early in the morning, on that fall morning, while the bells were ringing crazily and the whistles were shrieking, the effigy was strung up to the cross arm of the street light where it hung until it was brought down by the burning pile beneath it. That was the mood at the end of World War I.

In 1918 too, the Batavia Township Park Board purchased the section of land between the present library and the present Johnson





funeral home to be used as a through street and a park. It proved to be a wise investment, for here have been held annual American Legion carnivals, Union church services, Boy Scout ice cream socials, and all manner of festivities. A few years after the park had been completed, the American Legion planted elm trees on either side of the right of way as a war memorial.

## 1919

The year of 1919 Batavians experienced two events directly traceable to the war. There was a great parade complete with floats, bands, veterans, huge marching crowds, greater watching crowds. Its purpose was to commemorate and honor those 371 men who had served in the war, and, especially, the eight who had given their lives.

American labor in Batavia, as well as elsewhere, had cooperated with the war effort without forcing their desire for more pay and shorter working hours. With the end of hostilities and the rise in prices, Batavia working men, as well as working men elsewhere, struck for better conditions. They demanded the eight hour day, no piece work and a closed shop.

## 1920

Visitors to Batavia are impressed with the fine healthy looking young people. As much as anything, this is due to the hours they spend in the "quarry". In 1920, Mr. F.H. Beach, formerly with the Newton Wagon Co. and the Emerson Brantingham Company, deeded the property that he owned that once was the Barker and Hunter stone quarry, the largest quarry in town, to the Township Park Board. Fed by underground springs, it has made a most delightful park with an excellent swimming pool. Here there are swimming instructors, modern bath houses, life guards, scenic roads, picnic



tables, fireplaces -- and crowds of people enjoying themselves.

## 1925

The attention that was given to the churches early in the city's history continued through the years at a fairly steady pace, even during the "roaring twenties". In 1925, the German Immanuel Lutheran Church dedicated a fine, brick church. In 1921, the Swedish Missions had erected their beautiful brick church at the corner of Houston and Washington Streets. There were about thirteen different sects in town, which certainly should have been sufficient for a town of 5,000. The colored Baptists had had an organization for quite a few years now. The number associated with the Christian Science Church, that had been organized in 1897, was small but sincere.

No, most people in Batavia did not know that they were living in a "wild" period except that there had been some objection to the bobbing of hair and the new dress styles.

## 1926

This year the Kane County Forest Preserves were inaugurated, which, to Batavians, meant that Johnson's Mound became a park to which they could take a picnic dinner or a drive on a warm summer's evening. They like to walk down to see Shabbona's tree. Once in a while someone will remark about the part that the glacier played in forming this mound.

## 1931

The formation of the Batavia Body Company from the old Emerson-Brantingham Company, which, in turn, had started as the Newton Wagon Company, was the final testament that the old order had passed. The new corporation, organized with A.T. Jackson as president, manufactures refrigerated bodies for auto trucks as



well as other types of special truck bodies. This change had come gradually. In 1926, Campana had started to manufacture Italian Balm in a small red brick factory located on Batavia Avenue directly opposite the Van Nortwick mansion. In the same building, earlier, there was printed a small magazine called the Household Journal. It was during the time that the latter company was doing so much business that the Batavia post office did its peak business. The magazine has long since departed, but the Campana company, with their exciting radio advertising, have built up a business great enough to warrant the construction in 1937 of a beautiful modernistic building on North Batavia Avenue. The glass brick factory itself is constructed along simple lines, but the products are quite fancy, hand lotion, toilet water, and other cosmetics. The factory that was vacated was turned over to the Frank G. Shuman Company, which manufactures printed labels.

Prior to the founding of the Batavia Body Company, too, was the establishment of the Batavia Foundry and Machine Company at the corner of First and Mallory Avenue to manufacture brass and aluminum castings and metal patterns. Close by, the Lindgren Foundry was established the same year, (1920) to make a high grade line of cast iron and steel castings. Along the same line, in 1938, the C. & F. Forge Company was organized to make drop forgings, employing about forty men. In 1940, a new factory called the Furnas Electric Company, making all kinds of electric switches and controls, commenced operations with about fifty men in a brick building at the corner of McKee Street and Van Nortwick Avenue. That was the story of Batavia industry when war came, with the Batavia Body company marking the turning point from the





old to the new. Only the Shumway Foundry of the old businesses was and is still operating.

### 1932

In 1932, the little town of Batavia had three men holding state offices. Rodney M. Brandon, who lives in the Lockwood house, was Director of Public Welfare under Governor Emmerson from 1929-1933. He gained national prominence in this capacity, being re-appointed to the same office in 1941 by Governor Green. In the House of Representatives, John F. Petit from Batavia was serving his second term and was to serve several more. In the Senate was Arnold P. Benson, a graduate of Batavia Public Schools and a life long resident of the city. He served in the 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, and 62nd General Assemblies. He was minority leader in the 61st Assembly and president pro tempore in the 62nd and still later state Secretary of Agriculture. He was also editor and publisher of the Batavia Herald, Batavia's only newspaper. He is now (1962) vice-president of the First National Bank.

### 1933

From September 1 to 4, 1933, the Batavia Centennial was celebrated in the grand manner. On the first day, Friday, crowds lined the streets to watch a parade complete with various divisions; juvenile, historical, industrial, calithumpian, advertising, and decorative. Saturday came the pageant on the river showing the events before the coming of the white settlers. Industrial displays were in the library park. Sunday afternoon a memorial to the pioneers was dedicated in the east city park. The principal address of the afternoon was given by Lieut. Governor Thomas F. Donovan, and in the evening by the Reverend John Norris Hall. Monday after the day's homecoming picnic, a huge and beautiful pageant

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of the hundred years of progress was shown at the quarry park. An audience from all over the valley watched from one side of the pool the stage on the far side where scenes of their history were depicted by their friends and townspeople. All became conscious and proud of their heritage.

#### 1941 - 1945

Hundreds of little towns all over the country were shocked by the destruction of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. As in the other two wars, Batavia responded with the sending of her young people to serve, over seven hundred of them. As in the other two wars, too, home folks adjusted consumption to meet the times. They watched the war news, the battles, the casualties, the deaths of those they knew. Of the 731 who left for service, thirty did not return, four times the figures of the First World War. Then came the death of President F.D. Roosevelt, April 12, 1945, with the San Francisco Conference starting three days later. Events followed quickly; May 8, Official V E Day; August 5, the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima; September 20, the official V J Day. Peace.

With peace came the need to adjust to peace time production. In this war, unlike the other conflicts, Batavia had aided materially in the production of war time goods. The foundries had had big war orders, but the chief producer was the Batavia Metal Products Company. The story of this firm is unique in Batavia. Dr. Henry M. Garsson and his co-partners received an order from the government to produce war goods. Having no factory, they came to Batavia in 1942 and bought the U.S.W.E. & P. Company, at quite a good price because of their great urgency to go into production. Later the Challenge was purchased. With a corps of 800 men, the Batavia



Metal Company turned out 8-inch shells, bomb parts, tanks, wood pipe, tent poles, chemical warfare service trucks and other products for the Army, Navy, and the Air Corps. For several years, Mr. Garsson was very busy in Batavia. Glenwood Park was changed to Garsson Park, there was even talk of his wanting to change the name of the town to Garsson City. Then in 1946 there came such news headings as: Inquiry into Batavia Metal War Production Produces Hot News. News stories told of unethical practices on the part of Garsson and Senator May, putting the name of Batavia in national headlines. That was a queer experience for the Batavians. The important thing as far as Batavians were concerned though was that they showed humor and stability in the way they adjusted themselves to this unpleasant experience. The company was found to have no assets to satisfy the claims of the creditors.

And what happened to this disreputable business? In May of 1948 Batavia Metal Products was declared insolvent by its creditors and a referee in bankruptcy was appointed. The last of July, 1946 the Challenge Co. and the U. S. W. E. & P. Co. plants were sold to the Rausch Industries. Ray R. Rausch of Detroit, a former Ford Co. official in charge of production, was elected president of the new concern. However in October, 1947 creditors of the Batavia Metal Products were given a report by J.G. Grawoig, operating as "debtor in possession" but the creditors were given no encouragement of payment of their claims. In the meantime, Dr. Henry M. Garsson, his brother Murray and Congressman Andrew May, were given two year prison terms for conspiracy to defraud the government.

Attempts were made in September of 1950 to sell the property





at a court sale but the bids were too few and too low and were rejected. Bids were rejected again the following November when the property was put up for sale.

All of this time the Batavia Council was urging immediate action to reopen the plants because of the resulting unemployment, delinquency in the payment of taxes by the industries affected and the deterioration of the idle plants. A letter sent to the Referee in Bankruptcy in January, 1950 by the City Council and various civic organizations stated, "We do strongly feel that termination of the long period of litigation and partial operation would be for the best interests of both the employees and community, and those interested as creditors."

March 23, 1951 the United States government bought the U.S. Co. plant of the Batavia Metal Products for \$803,458.54. This meant that the War Department and the U.S. Army would take over operation of the property. Later on that year, all machinery, equipment and raw materials were sold at auction. Still later the U.S. Co. plant was operated by the Fox Valley division of Standard Steel Spring Co. as the Fox Valley Ordnance Plant to produce shells. They operated mainly in the buildings south of First Street.

In 1958 operation of the plant was discontinued and the machinery was moved out. Finally, as a result of a second auction, on Friday, April 24, 1959, the old U.S. plant was sold to a four man combine of St. Charles and Chicago purchasers for \$250,000.00. Bidding was under the name of Batavia Enterprises, Inc. Since then several small concerns have occupied parts of these buildings.

In April of 1961 the Batavia Enterprises began tearing down the old stone buildings near the corner of Wilson and Water Streets to make way for a new Batavia shopping center. August 13,

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the Batavia firemen with the cooperation of nearby firemen burnt down the frame buildings in this vicinity. This was on a Sunday and was witnessed by a crowd of 7,000 people.

In the meantime, a big drain line had been placed across the Pond, running from Wilson Street to First Street to allow circulation of water through the drain. Then the Pond was gradually filled in in this area to make a parking space for the shopping center. That year, 1961, the roadway of First Street was widened from twelve feet to eighteen feet from Batavia Avenue to Island Avenue to allow for the increased traffic expected. As the beginning of the completion of the vision for a Greater Batavia Shopping Center, Batavia Enterprises announced the signing of a lease for the first store by the Jewel Tea Co. just before Christmas, 1961. Thus the era of industry on this site ends and the era of shops begins.

When the Challenge Co. part of the Batavia Metal Products was put up for sale by the courts, it was purchased by Atty. E.B. Berndtson of Chicago. He leased or sold parts of the property to various companies. September 1, 1955 the Hill Manufacturing Co., manufacturers of steam and hot water heating products, used part of the old buildings and also erected a modern brick and concrete building to the south of the old buildings. Kritzer Radiant Coils, Inc. occupy these buildings at present. Hanson's Kitchens were in part of the Challenge buildings for a while, now this area is occupied by the Federal Surplus Property Utilization Station.

#### 1946

On July 27, Batavia welcomed home her heroes of World War II in a parade of floats, school children, bands and some 400 war veterans. Later in the day the new Athletic Field was dedicated as a War Memorial.



1947

On October 4, the town celebrated the completion of the installation of the new mercury vapor lights along Wilson Street.

1948

This was the year of the big building boom with five business houses in the process of construction. These were: Carlstedt Motor Service with their warehouse at the corner of Prairie and Webster Streets; the large Feldott Farm Store out on E. Wilson Street; Thomas and Schweichert, later Thomas and Carlson, Implement Co., farm machinery salesmen, 102 N. River Street; Fox Tool Service Co. on State Street operated by Paul Graves, tool repair and servicing and the Batavia Farm Service, run by the Hall brothers, Harold and Arnold, on Main Street. In May H.T. Phipps bought the Federated Store, the old Jules Morris establishment, and has made a large department store out of it. Also the Bethany Lutheran Church spent \$40,000 on revamping the main section of their edifice by tearing down the old steeple and erecting a tower in the north west corner, building a modern addition to the north and covering the entire plant with a uniform tan brick. By 1952 they had spent \$160,000.00 on improvements and had a beautiful modern church to show for it.

1949

The American Legion purchased the Geiss Block in 1948 and had a Grand Opening Ball in their new quarters March 19th of this year. The Congregational Church dedicated the new Van Arsdale Memorial organ on Sunday, April 24th. The Bethany Lutheran Church addition was dedicated on May 1st.

Helicopter air mail service was started in October, stopping in Geneva to pick up Batavia air mail. This was a twice-a-day





service out of Chicago, the plane flying a triangular course, picking up mail along its course.

## 1950

During the ten years from 1950 to 1960 the school population increased by leaps and bounds, faster even than the city population. The city population in 1950 was 5,862, in 1960 it was 7496, an increase of 21.8%. School enrollment in 1950 was 1278, in 1960, 2086, an increase of 38.7%. The greater increase in school population was due primarily to the fact that country schools were being closed and the children were being brought to Batavia schools in busses. It was one of the signs of the times and meant better schools for country youngsters. The result was that schools were soon crowded to the walls and a building program was initiated with the following changes:

In June of 1950, the old antiquated McWayne School was razed to make way for a modern school building. This was finished so that school children could occupy it at the beginning of the fall term in the same year. Open house was held February 4, 1951 when the new plant consisting of ten classrooms, a kindergarten room, gym and offices were displayed to Batavians.

In September of 1950 the Home Economics Building, originally the home of John Van Nortwick, was torn down, preparatory to the erection of the High School addition to the south of the older structure. A.F. Fairbanks was low bidder for this addition, a partial two story brick building consisting of a large gym, a band room, cafeteria and a kitchen. This was finished in time for the 1952 graduating class to have their exercises in the new combined gym and auditorium.

The new facilities for the High School necessitated some



alterations in the older part so, that by September, 1954, four new classrooms, two study rooms and a library had been made from the old gym and other obsolete rooms.

November 9, 1954 the Board of Education let the contract for a new elementary school on ten acres of land in the southeast part of town. The next year, 1955, this school was completed in time to be occupied by 220 pupils in September. This building has seven classrooms, a multi-use room, a kindergarten room and an office. This school was dedicated February 9, 1956 and was given the name of the J.B. Nelson School, honoring the school superintendent.

It wasn't long before the southwest section of town needed a new grade school. So in June of 1956, bonds were issued for a new elementary school on the Carlisle Road. This was erected on a fourteen acre site and is 290 feet long and from 63 to 98 feet wide, one story and similar to the J.B. Nelson School. In September, 1957 this school was completed. It has nine classrooms, a kindergarten room and an office. February 9, 1958 this school was dedicated and named the Alice Gustafson School in honor of the retired principal of the Louise White School.

When bonds were issued for the Alice Gustafson school, a fifty acre site was purchased for a future High School on the Main Street Road. Plans are being made to extend West Wilson Street out to this plot.

This year found the J.B. Nelson School overloaded so that a seven room addition was started in December, 1961, to the east of the present building.

So we see this school building problem is never finished. One school is enlarged and satisfies the needs for a time, then another



school needs expansion. That of course is inevitable and is the result of our ever increasing population.

In 1950 we started our famous Fourth-of-July Fireworks program which has been carried on annually ever since with an ever increasing display and attendance. This is put on by the Batavia Fire Department in the Athletic Field. The first year 4000 people enjoyed the display, paid for from funds contributed by Batavia citizens.

In June of that year, natural gas instead of artificial gas was provided by the Western United Gas and Electric Co. This has gradually become a tremendous industry with a vast network of pipelines supplying nearly every city and hamlet throughout the entire United States with gas for heating as well as for cooking. Now its difficult to buy coal for heating the ordinary house because very few dealers have any call for it, gas or oil being used almost entirely. In fact, a six-year old girl the other day, when she heard her parents talking about coal, asked, "Mom, what's coal?"

Another evidence of our changing world happened this year. In December the Sons of the North lodge disbanded. Founded in 1896 by N.P. Gustafson as a mutual aid and death benefit society, its purpose was to bring the Swedish men together for social reasons, to become acquainted with each other, to keep alive the traditions of the old country and to learn the history, government and mores of their adopted country. But it had lived its day and was no longer needed so it passed out of existence as did the Sisters of the North and the Daughters of the North later on.

### 1953

Two events made Batavia history this year, one good, one bad. Kincaid and Hutchinson, city planners, made their detailed





report and plans for the future growth and development of Batavia, submitting it to the City July 15, 1953. Up to that time Batavia was like Topsy-"just grewed" with no rhyme or reason nor plan. It was obvious to our City Fathers that the time had come to have some definite plan for city growth so certain sections were zoned for dwellings, retail businesses, and light and heavy industry. Since then other city plans have been projected and a land-use program for an extended area one and one-half miles outside the city limits has been put into effect. This will control subdivisions, streets, sidewalks, industries, etc. in this area.

The sad thing was the complete destruction by fire of the pattern shed with all patterns of the Lindgren Foundry Co. The estimated loss was a million dollars.

The Korean War ended July 27, 1953 after a more than three year conflict. Three Batavians were sacrificed to the cause.

#### 1954

In October we thought a second flood has started. Did it rain! From 4:00 PM on the 9th to 7:00 AM on the 11th, 7.86 inches of rain fell, the heaviest rain here in 69 years.

#### 1955

January 12th, Miss Myrtle Bartholomew died. When her will was probated, it was found that four Batavia churches, the First Methodist, Congregational, First Baptist and the Calvary Episcopal, had each benefited by receiving a sum of \$2,000 in an endowment fund, the income from which was to be used for organ repair and maintenance and to secure and maintain a library of church music.

She also bequeathed \$125,000.00 for the erection of a Civic Center "as a memorial to the memory of Harry B. Bartholomew and Myrtle Bartholomew and their interest in the community of



Batavia." The administrating board was composed of Emil J. Benson, chm., Walter R. Johnson, Bruce B. Paddock, J.B. Nelson and Arnold P. Benson. They gave much time to the supervision and management of this project. November 26, 1961, the Civic Center was dedicated along with a new parking area to the north of this building and the Library. This area has room for about fifty cars.

The disease polio (poliomyelitis) of late years has become increasingly malignant, several Batavia children and older people being permanently crippled by it. Recently Dr. Salk had, by long experimentation, found a vaccine that, if taken in time, would render a person immune to it. April 28, 1955 this vaccine was used for the first time here, being administered to the first and second graders.

#### 1956

Many things of importance happened this year. The Furnas Electric Co. put up an addition of 32,000 square feet, thus expanding the plant 50%. Three smaller buildings were erected on W. Wilson Street, south of Furnas': The Unity Pattern Works, Maves Heating Co. and the Batavia Sink Top Co. The Campana Corporation have completed a four year improvement, replacing the old exterior brick with new.

Arthur Swanson built a new hardware store between the Post Office building and the Pond. Jack Layden modernized the Batavia News Agency, later calling it Jack's Toy Box.

Home building was very active and several sections were added to the city. Three miles of blacktop pavement were laid.

With the increased growth of the city, the East Wilson Street bridge was a bottle-neck for auto travel on our only river-crossing



street. This was widened from 42 to 48 feet so that the roadbed was of equal width throughout the thoroughfare.

This was the year the scourge, the Dutch elm disease, first struck our beautiful, stately American elms. It was introduced into Eastern United States from Europe about 1930 and has gradually spread north, south and west. Scientists have worked desperately to find a cure for it. Sprays to kill the elm beetle that carries the virus from one tree to another have only been partially successful. Batavia, up to the end of 1961, has lost 1794 out of her original 4000 trees. Fortunately new trees of other kinds are being planted to take their place.

#### 1957

This year the C. A. & E. RR, the third rail electric line, reached the end of its course. Started at the beginning of the twentieth century, after many vicissitudes, the last car made its final run into the Batavia terminal April 30, 1957. Used by hundreds of Batavia commuters as a quick and easy way to get to their work in the Chicago loop or at stations along the way, many shed a tear of sadness at the passing of this familiar mode of transportation.

#### 1958

The Batavia Baptist Church dedicated its modern educational unit February 2. In December the Logan Street Baptist Church was started and dedicated April 3, 1960. November 18, 1960 the Congregationalists celebrated their 125th anniversary of their organization, the Methodists celebrating their 125th March 5, 1961 and the Baptists on June 24, 1961. The Holy Cross Catholic Church dedicated their hall which included a modern parochial school on May 7, 1961. The Immanuel Lutheran Church felt the need for an





addition to take care of their expanding membership. During 1961 they built and, on December 17, 1961, dedicated a brick and stone building containing sixteen Sunday school rooms, a nursery, kitchen and office.

This year the Illinois tollroads opened. The North-West on September 20 to Beloit, Wisconsin; the East-West on November 21 curving down to connect with U.S. Route 30 near Route 47 out of Aurora; the Tri-State, running from the Indiana state line to the Wisconsin state line and skirting Chicago on the west, was completed in December.

### 1959

In June a new industry was started here. Ground was broken along Route 25 south of town for a building for the Celanese Plastic Co., a division of Plastics Horizons. They grew so fast that in 1961 they had to put up an addition much larger than the original plant.

Dunbar-Kapple, Inc. moved from Geneva into the old Appleton Manufacturing Co. buildings on the Island. There are two units; one making farm equipment, trailers and vacuators and employing 400 people; the other making aircraft component parts and employing 120.

Furnas Electric Co. was expanding practically continuously and by the end of 1961 had completely filled its property with buildings and was looking around for more land nearby to occupy.

November 1, 1959 the Illinois Bell Telephone Co. started using dial telephones in this area. In December, 1961 extended area service was started, allowing Batavia users to call Aurora, Elgin and other nearby towns toll free.

The Batavia Savings and Building Association celebrated their fiftieth anniversary.



1960

The Batavia Public Library needed more room especially for the children's department, a room for their own books including tables where they could enjoy reading their own books and magazines. Work was started the preceding year on this addition and dedicated April 14, 1960.

June 5, 1956 a boat club was organized to take a greater advantage of boating and water skiing on our river. Memorial Day, 1959, they put on a Water Carnival which included a parade of thirty-one club-owned boats participating. The next year they felt the need of a club house of their own as a gathering place and close-by a launching site for their boats, so they cooperatively built such a house at the end of Logan Street near the river.

1961

The American Legion sold their large building, the Geiss Block, in 1960 to William D. Rachielles, the druggist. This year they bought a smaller brick building nearby at 8 E. Wilson Street.

The Revere House, a twenty-six family apartment building was started in May at the corner of S. Batavia Avenue and Elm Street on the H.N. Wade property. It opened for occupancy October 15.

Walt's Supermarket, owned by Walter and Lee Hocksprung of Aurora, was started in the spring at the corner of Van Buren and Webster Streets after the two houses on the site had been moved to other quarters. This modern grocery and meat market, with ample parking area, opened for business on November 7.

1962 -

### THE TIME IS NOW

Now let's sit back and do some serious thinking and ask ourselves a few pertinent questions:



Just what are our disadvantages?

What mistakes have we made in the past?

What can we do to correct them?

What are our advantages and good qualities?

How can we sell these to others so that they will want to live in this beautiful little city?

Kincaid and Hutchinson, in 1953, listed our disadvantages as these: We are not on a major east-west road like the other cities up and down the river. We were passed up when the main railroads fanned out of Chicago to build up the Golden West, and, incidentally, the towns along the routes.

These are irremediable losses but we have learned to live with them and to adjust ourselves to them. When we want to go by train to Chicago, we go to Geneva to take the C&NW Ry., or to Aurora to take the Burlington. More often we go east by auto, formerly by Alternate Route 30 out of Geneva or via the Butterfield Road, Route 55, out of North Aurora. Now, of course, the fastest and easiest way is to go four miles south to the East-West Tollroad. Follow this in and you are downtown in Chicago in thirty minutes or less by continuing on the Congress Street Expressway east of the Tri-State Tollway.

We are erecting needed single family housing units. A shopping center is being built now on the Island. The Jewel Tea Co. has signed the first lease with the Batavia Enterprises to provide a food store. The latter have already made plans and will carry them out as soon as the weather permits, to erect an L-shaped row of shops facing north and east, near the Wilson and Water Streets corner. This will house five or six stores with ample parking area for cars and readily accessible from both the west and east sides.





The Council has frowned on more business houses along Batavia Avenue for several reasons. One, because of the present traffic congestion on the street, which would be increased with more stores here. A second reason is obvious, a store opened nearby existing homes reduces the value of these homes and it certainly makes them less desirable.

We need more separate storm and sanitary sewers. We will need more water mains for the new subdivisions, necessitating, eventually, another well.

We need more direct traffic patterns through our town, and secondary through streets north and south, one paralleling Batavia Avenue on the west side, and one paralleling River Street on the east side.

The Fox River should be cleaned up and dredged where necessary. The River is one of our greatest heritages-let's keep it clean and beautiful.

The City Council is planning a land use program for an outreach of one and a half miles in all directions beyond the city limits. This plan would have the approval of the county zoning board so that areas would be allocated for industry as well as for subdivisions. Location and size of roads, minimum size of lots and type of houses could undoubtedly be controlled. In other words, the Council would have the right to maintain a strict enforcement of the zoning ordinance and the building code in this area.

We need more parks. Its unfortunate that the island parks south of town are not more conveniently accessible. How many Batavia citizens use them at all? Personally I would like to see an access road, either on one side of the river or the other, running as close to the river as possible with frequent parking areas for



fishermen, for lovers of beauty of scenery, lovers of birds or those who just like to rest and loaf in the calm serenity of the stream. This road would run along the river from as far north as possible to as far south as possible, only leaving the river's edge where it is absolutely necessary to circumvent some object that cannot or should not be moved. If the C&NW Ry is ever abandoned that would be an ideal site for this road, but the road should definitely not be one for speedsters.

So much for the debit side of our ledger. Now let's look at the credit side, and I believe that we can say, with all confidence, that we are way over in the black here.

There are many opportunities for employment in the valley. The cities from Elgin to Aurora always seem to be busy and in need of both men and women in industry. If one cannot find work in Batavia that appeals to him or that he is especially fitted for, he can assuredly find work that suits him nearby.

Most people, after they become established here, like everything about the town. Their neighbors are friendly and helpful. They, the neighbors that is, will talk and visit over the garden fence with them. There is a friendly rivalry as to who has the best kept lawn, the finest flowers or the earliest and most succulent vegetables. If they are in trouble, the neighbors are there to sympathize and help them in every way possible. That breeds contentment and love of the community. It pulls at the heart-strings if and when one does have to leave this beloved town of ours.

We have a High School and five grade schools, all fully accredited, with a total enrollment this year, 1961, of 2145. We have a privately operated school for mentally handicapped children here. Several colleges are located nearby with both graduate and



undergraduate classes available, as well as evening courses.

We have sixteen fine churches in Batavia, representing most every denomination.

We have an excellent public library with some 17,000 volumes, records and exhibits with lending facilities from State libraries. Our librarians are of the best.

There are four hospitals within eight miles of Batavia. We have nine practicing physicians and one medical clinic here. Also we are close to Chicago and its superlative hospitals when special treatment is required.

Our newspaper, the Batavia Herald, is published weekly. The Aurora Beacon-News, printed in Aurora, with an Up-river page of news, is published daily. Radio stations WMRO and WKKD-WKDD-FM in Aurora and WGBS in St. Charles serve the community.

Our city government is aldermanic with a mayor and ten aldermen and with no general obligation bonded indebtedness for the City. The Council members are all earnest, sincere servants of the citizens working for the common good of all. That is another big asset of the small city.

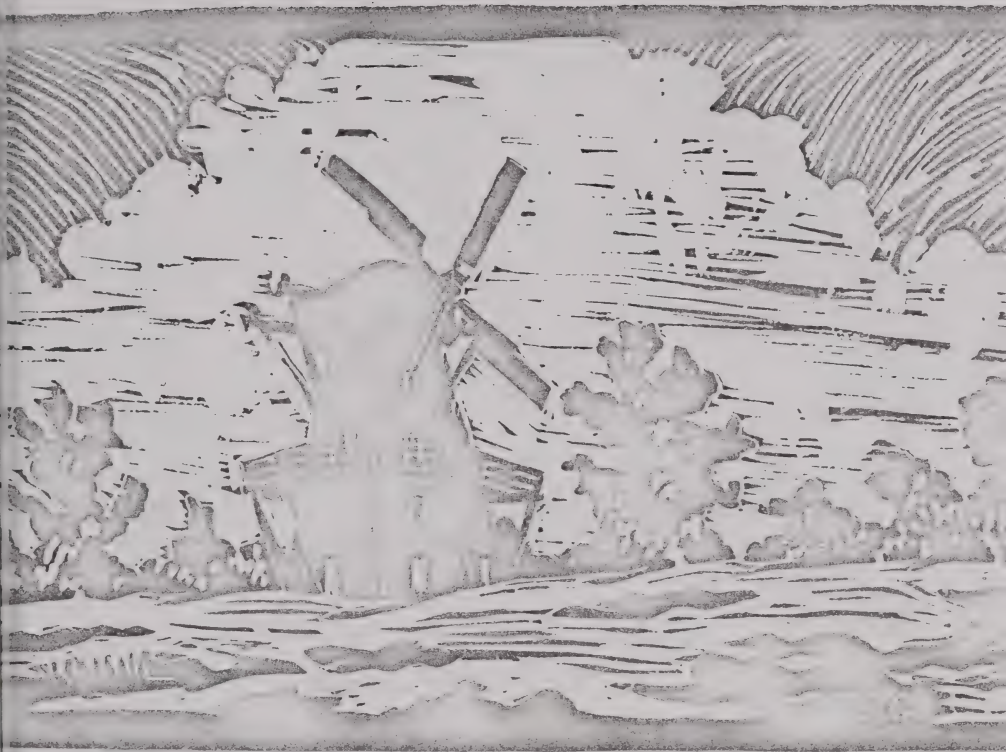
We have first rate police protection, a Chief with six policemen and two radio patrol cars on twenty-four hour duty. Recently an Auxiliary Police Force of sixteen men has been organized.

Our fire department is among the highest rated in the State with a Class 5 insurance rate for Batavia property. The department has four paid men and twenty-one men who are paid by call. They operate five pieces of apparatus, three pumpers, a rescue truck and a combination pumper and aerial ladder truck.

We have three city parks, including a swimming pool with an

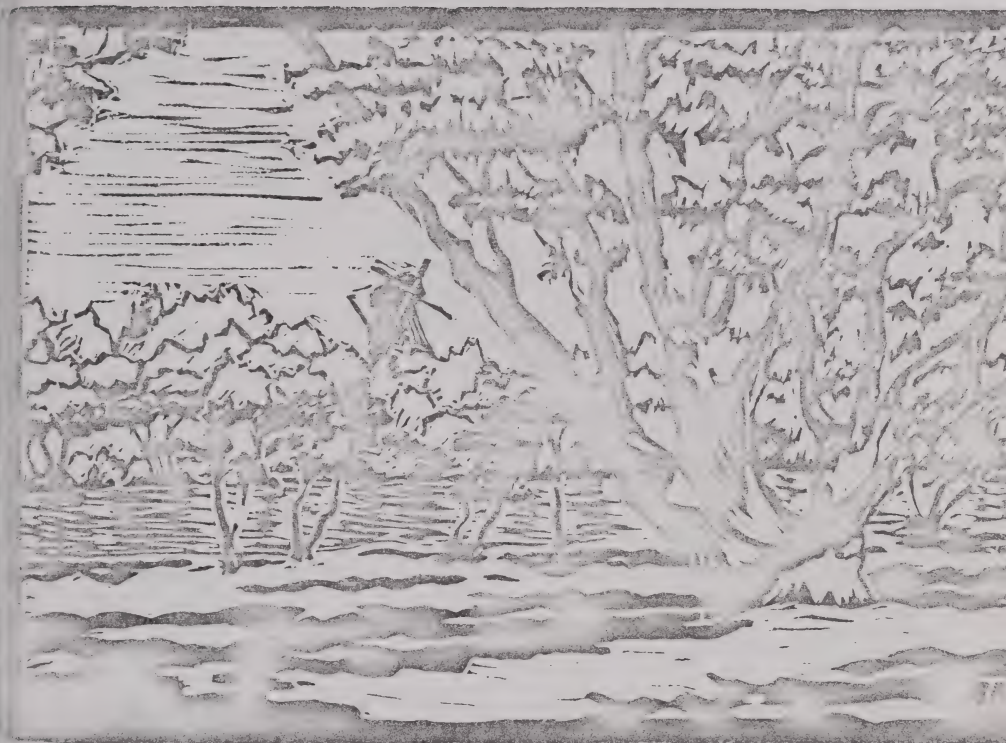






The Famous Dutch Mill at the Fabyan Forest Preserve.  
North of Batavia.





The Island at the Fabyan Forest Preserve.



area of 50,000 square feet and six playgrounds, all with a summer supervised program, also a lighted athletic field.

Well kept paved roads branch out in all directions leading to nearby and distant towns and with many state and federal trunk line roads. We have a bus line that gives us service from Aurora to Elgin.

The above is only part of our inventory. Here are some odds and ends: Statistically, the city population is 7,496 and the township population is 10,575 according to the 1960 government census. Its area is five square miles, covered by 2,296 homes, 45 apartments, 208 business houses and fifty-two factories. Batavia has twenty-seven miles of paved streets, 29 miles of water mains and 26 miles of sewer mains.

As to our utilities. Many sections of the country are suffering from a water shortage, but Batavia is not. It is served by a municipally owned water supply from two deep wells. The average daily consumption is 600,000 gallons which passes through a 250,000 gallon reservoir.

There are approximately 26 miles of sewers in Batavia, part of which is a combined sanitary and storm sewer. The present sewage treatment plant was built in 1935, and, since it operates at only one-half capacity, any additional sewage admitted from new growth areas can be handled without much difficulty.

We mentioned roads out of Batavia, let's be more specific. State Route 31 uses Batavia avenue, following the river north and south. The parallel road on the east side is State Route 25, using South River Street and North Washington Avenue through town. They are both scenic roads, running to Oswego on the south and Algonquin on the north. The Kaneville Road is Main Street extended







A Lantern in the Japanese Garden.  
Fabyan Forest Preserve.



and passes through beautiful countryside dotted with well-kept farms. This is the road one takes to reach the forest preserve at Johnsons Mound and to reach State Route 47. The concrete road east, following East Wilson Street connects with Roosevelt Road to Chicago.

All these roads lead to several nearby places of national importance. Two miles south is Mooseheart, the "City of Childhood." Educators come to Mooseheart from all over the world to study what is done here, especially in the fields of vocational guidance, physical well-being, and mental health. Fifteen miles east, at Lisle, is the Morton Arboretum with its 800 acres of land devoted to all trees, shrubs and vines that will grow in this locality. Beautiful at any time of the year, it is especially beautiful in the spring of the year when the lilacs and crab-apple trees are in bloom. It is a congregating place also for all lovers of bird life.

Those in search of parks may go a mile and a-half north to the Kane County Fabyan Forest Preserve. This large property used to be the estate of Colonel and Mrs. George Fabyan. Colonel Fabyan had made a fortune in the East in cotton milling, had served the government during World War I in the codification department, had carried on important experiments in the study of sounds, and was sure that "Bacon wrote Shakespeare." Now his lovely home and grounds are enjoyed by thousands every year. Some picnic in the wooded area on the east side of the river where there are tables and fireplaces to take care of several thousands of people. Many visit the famed Dutch mill that stands sixty-eight feet high and really served during the first world war as a grist mill. They see the fifteen foot replica of the famous Black Hawk statue on the Rock River at Oregon. Gardeners take especial delight in the intriguing Japanese garden with its informal pool crossed by a brilliant red





arched bridge with a Japanese lantern nearby. If Fabyan's is too cultivated for the taste, Johnson's Mound, seven miles west of Batavia, affords quite a contrast. This rather wild spot had a winding road that takes picnickers to one of the high points in Kane County and an ideal picnicking place. Near the base of the Mound is one of the largest elm trees in Illinois, named the Chief Shabbona elm. Kane County has three other forest preserves, each with a beauty and distinction of its own.

For more sophisticated interests, there is Chicago, at the most only an hour away. The Art Institute, museums, schools, lectures, concerts, operas, plays, big stores and other attractions are readily accessible. Batavians may thus have the joys of city life without its dirt and inconveniences.

Yes, there are many roads leading out of town, but many Batavians find most of their interest centered at home. They find social life in many lodges, clubs and patriotic societies. Working for the betterment of the community is an especially active Chamber of Commerce, a recently organized Batavia Junior Chamber or Jaycee, a Rotary Club, the League of Women Voters and the Woman's Club with its various departments. Other women's clubs include the P.E.O. Sisterhood, Chapter EA, the Batavia Panhellenics and the Young Mother's Club. For the young folk there is the Huddle, three Boy Scout Troops, three Girl Scout Troops and several Cub Packs and Brownie Troops. A newly organized Batavia Historical Society has grown rapidly and aroused much interest in the history of Batavia. The patriotic societies include the American Legion, Batavia post No. 504; the American Legion Auxiliary Unit No. 504; Veterans of Foreign Wars, Overseas Post of Batavia, Illinois No. 1197; the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary and The





Women's Relief Corps No. 325. The recreational clubs comprise the following; Batavia Boat Club, the Kane Kounty Klunker Klub, the Little League Baseball Club and the Sportsman's League.

The benevolent and fraternal lodges include Knights of Columbus, Batavia Council No. 2191; Catholic Daughters of America, Holy Cross Court No. 558; Knights of Pythias, Rowena Lodge No. 535; Pythian Sisters, Rowena Temple No. 171; Masonic Batavia Lodge No. 404, A.F. & A.M.; Order of Eastern Star, Batavia Chapter No. 480; Loyal Order of Moose, Fox River Lodge No. 682; Women of the Moose, Batavia Chapter No. 722; Order of Vasa, Viljan Lodge No. 349; Independent Order of Vikings, Ring Lodge No. 18; Ladies of the Vikings, Blenda Lodge No. 32. Every one of the six schools has its Parent-Teachers Association. Thus, you can see, Batavia offers quite a choice.

This is the inventory of the city-its facts, figures, sizes and quantities. None of this is sensational, nothing is unique. If one were to look for something different, he might find it in the trees, for Batavia is known as a city of beautiful trees, still evident although we have lost many of our vase-shaped American elms to the Dutch elm disease. Fortunately, the early settlers realized and appreciated their importance for shade and beauty. The town is indebted to Dr. D.K. Town for the large elms and maples along Walnut Street, Union Avenue and South Batavia avenue. The long row of Scotch pines and spruce along North Washington Street are on land once owned by Joel McKee and undoubtedly were planted by him. Charles W. Shumway planted the elms around his home on South Batavia Avenue and Elm Street, thus giving the name to the latter street. A boy by the name of DeLoss Bradley, father of the late Mrs. Rachielles, noticed that a switch he had pulled in the



woods had roots, so he stuck it in a hole-to become the huge cottonwood on Main and Jefferson Streets. Judge T.C. Moore, a friend of Lincoln, planted the lovely trees on the Shannon place, 360 Main Street.

It is painful for any lover of beautiful trees to walk down some of our streets and see the gaps in the parkings where some of our American elms have had to be cut down due to infection by the Dutch elm disease. Batavia has cut these trees down immediately and not let them stand like gaunt specters to continue to infect surrounding elms. Our town has had a consistent spray program which has done much to retard the spread of the disease. Now the elms are being replaced by other hardwood trees in variety in the parkings and in the lawns of our property owners. We do hope that the memorial elms on West Wilson Street between Batavia Avenue and Washington Street planted by the American Legion thirty-five years ago will flourish for a long time.

The river is also a rather unique asset. The Fox has been improved. Retaining walls have been built along its banks, the bed cleaned out and trees and shrubs planted along its shores. It is stocked frequently with game fish, so that fishing is considered excellent, if one does not know of the "catches" of yesteryear. Once again, boating is popular on the river, especially motor-boating, thanks to the Batavia Boat Club. The islands in the river south of the East Wilson Street bridge have been beautified and joined together by suspension bridges to unify them, the work of the W.P.A. during the depression. One of the islands, the old Clark's Island and now called the Babe Woodard Park, has been developed into an athletic field primarily for the Little League Baseball Club. It is well that the river still has esthetic appeal,



for its utilitarian value is practically gone with the advent of steam, gasoline and electric power. However much more could be done to the river to increase its beauty.

With such a heritage, Batavia cannot help but be a progressive and hospitable town. Her growth has been steady and healthy, never phenomenal. She has had men of keen minds and brilliant achievements in the past; she has them today. Batavians have come through great crises successfully in days gone by, as they will continue to fight through great crises today and tomorrow. This year, 1962, the town is 129 years old. This may not be old when compared with the cities of the Eastern seaboard of the United States or of Europe, but old enough to appreciate and enjoy our heritage and to realize the obligation it imposes on us to pass on our inheritance unsullied to future generations.





